

Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios



Peace Talks in Focus 2023.
Report on Trends and Scenarios

Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios

Authors:

Iván Navarro Milián
Josep Maria Royo Aspa
Jordi Urgell García
Pamela Urrutia Arestizábal
Ana Villellas Ariño
María Villellas Ariño

Peace Talks in Focus 2023.

Report on Trends and Scenarios

ISBN: 9788419778840

Legal deposit: B 18441-2018

Report completed in February 2024

This report was written by:

Iván Navarro Milián, Josep Maria Royo Aspa, Jordi Urgell García, Pamela Urrutia Arestizábal, Ana Villellas Ariño and María Villellas Ariño.

Design: Lucas Wainer Mattosso

Edition: Icaria Editorial / Escola de Cultura de Pau, UAB

Translation: Dustin Langan

Printed by: Ulzama

This book is printed on chlorine-free recycled paper.

The contents of this report are full responsibility of Escola de Cultura de Pau at UAB. The contents do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ACCD.

Citation:

Escola de Cultura de Pau. *Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios.*

Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

This work is part of the series *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios* annually published by the Escola de Cultura de Pau and is subject to a Creative Common International License



The total or partial reproduction, distribution and public communication of the work is permitted, provided that it is not for commercial purposes, and provided that the authorship of the original work is acknowledged. The creation of derivative works is not permitted.

Escola de Cultura de Pau

Edifici B13

Carrer de Vila Puig

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

08193 Bellaterra (Spain)

Tel: +34 93 581 14 14

Email: pr.conflict.escolapau@uab.cat

Web: <http://escolapau.uab.cat>

Index

Executive summary	7
Introduction	17
1. Negotiations in 2023: global overview and main trends	19
2. Peace negotiations in Africa	37
2.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends	39
2.2. Case study analysis	45
Great Lakes and Central Africa	45
Horn of Africa	56
Maghreb – North Africa	62
Southern Africa	66
West Africa	67
3. Peace negotiations in America	73
3.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends	73
3.2. Case study analysis	76
North America, Central America and the Caribbean	76
South America	77
4. Peace negotiations in Asia and the Pacific	85
4.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends	86
4.2. Case study analysis	89
4.2.1 Asia	89
East Asia	89
South Asia	89
South-east Asia	91
4.2.2 The Pacific	97
5. Peace negotiations in Europe	99
5.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends	100
5.2. Case study analysis	103
Eastern Europe	103
Russia and the Caucasus	108
South-east Europe	111
6. Peace negotiations in the Middle East	117
6.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends	117
6.2. Case study analysis	121
Mashreq	121
The Gulf	121
Annex 1. Summary of armed conflicts in 2023	133
Glossary	137
About the School for a Culture of Peace	141

List of tables, boxes, graphs and maps

Table 1.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in 2023_____	19
Graph 1.1.	Regional distribution of peace negotiations_____	22
Map 1.1	Peace negotiations in 2023_____	23
Table 1.2.	Armed conflicts and peace processes in 2023_____	24
Table 1.3.	Internal and international peace processes and negotiations with and without third parties_	26
Table 1.4.	Intergovernmental organisations as third parties in peace processes in 2023_____	29
Table 1.5.	Main agreements of 2023_____	34
Table 2.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023_____	37
Map 2.1.	Peace negotiations in Africa in 2023_____	39
Table 3.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in America in 2023_____	73
Map 3.1.	Peace negotiations in America in 2023_____	74
Table 4.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023_____	85
Map 4.1.	Peace negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023_____	86
Table 5.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2023_____	99
Map 5.1.	Peace negotiations in Europe in 2023_____	100
Table 6.1.	Summary of peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East in 2023_____	117
Map 6.1.	Peace negotiations in the Middle East in 2023_____	118

Executive summary

Peace negotiations 2023: analysis of trends and scenarios is a yearbook that analyses the peace processes and negotiations that took place in the world during 2023. The examination of the development and dynamics of negotiations worldwide allows to provide a comprehensive overview of peace processes, identify trends and comparatively analyse the various scenarios. One of the main objectives of this report is to provide information and analysis to those who participate in peaceful conflict resolution at different levels, including parties to disputes, mediators, civil society activists and others. The yearbook also aims to grant visibility to different formulas of dialogue and negotiation aimed at reversing dynamics of violence and channelling conflicts through political means in many contexts. Thus, it seeks to highlight, enhance and promote political, diplomatic and social efforts aimed at transforming conflicts and their root causes through peaceful methods.

Methodologically, the report draws mainly on the qualitative analysis of studies and information from many sources (the United Nations, international organisations, research centres, media outlets, NGOs and others), as well as on experience gained during field research. The report also cross-cuttingly incorporates a gender perspective in the study and analysis of peace processes.

The report is divided into six chapters. The first presents a summary and map of the 45 peace processes and negotiations that took place in 2023 and provides an overview of the main global trends. The next five chapters delve into the peace processes and negotiations from a geographic perspective. Each of them addresses the main trends of peace negotiations in Africa, America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, respectively, and describes the development and dynamics of each case in those regions. At the beginning of each of these five chapters, a map is included indicating the countries where peace processes and negotiations have occurred in 2023.

Peace processes and negotiations in 2023

AFRICA (18)	ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (10)	EUROPE (6)
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	DPR Korea – Republic of Korea	Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)
CAR	DPR Korea – USA	Cyprus
Chad	India (Assam)	Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)
DRC	India (Nagaland)	Moldova (Transdnistria)
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Myanmar	Russia – Ukraine ²
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Serbia – Kosovo
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Philippines (MILF)	
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	Philippines (MNLF)	
Libya	Philippines (NDF)	
Mali	Thailand (south)	
Morocco – Western Sahara		
Mozambique		
Senegal (Casamance)		
Somalia		
Somalia – Somaliland		
South Sudan		
Sudan ¹		
Sudan – South Sudan		
	AMERICA (6)	MIDDLE EAST (5)
	Colombia (ELN)	Iran (nuclear programme)
	Colombia (EMC)	Israel – Palestine
	Colombia (FARC)	Palestine
	Haiti	Syria
	Venezuela	Yemen
	Venezuela – Guyana	

Negotiations in 2023: global overview and main trends

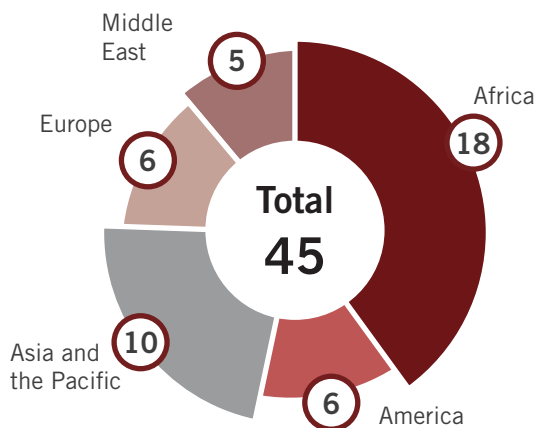
During 2023, a total of 45 peace processes and negotiations were identified on a worldwide level. Most of the cases analyzed were concentrated in Africa, which hosted 18, equivalent to 40% of the total. Asia and the Pacific was the region with the second-highest number of cases, with a total of 10, representing 23% of the

negotiations in 2023. The rest of the negotiations were distributed between America and Europe, with six cases each (13%), and the Middle East, with five (11%).

There was a rise in the number of peace processes and negotiations worldwide, in keeping with the

1. In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.
2. Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian dialogue, Ukraine’s dialogue with international actors about parts of its peace plan and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of peace negotiations



upward trend of the previous two years (37 processes in 2021, 39 in 2022), though the levels of 2018 and 2019 were not reached (49 and 50 cases, respectively). However, this increase was not accompanied by lower levels of violence and global armed conflict. On the contrary, the total number of active armed conflicts also increased during the year (36 armed conflicts in 2023, compared to 33 in 2022) and violence got worse in Israel-Palestine and in high-intensity conflicts such as those in Sudan, Mali, Western Sahel, the DRC, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan and elsewhere. In addition, there were other conflicts trending similarly in 2023 to the previous year but with high levels of violence, such as in the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Ethiopia (Oromia), Russia-Ukraine and Syria. The increase in the number of processes took place mainly in Africa (18 cases in 2023 compared to 15 in 2022, 12 in 2021 and 13 in 2020). The three new processes in Africa were negotiations between the federal government of Ethiopia and representatives of the armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Tanzania; the resumption of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) dispute; and the relaunch of international contacts and initiatives to promote dialogue and reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland. In the Americas, two more cases were identified than the previous year, as a new peace process began in Colombia between the government and the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) and talks started between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana regarding their territorial dispute over the Essequibo region. Finally, in the Middle East, after the events of 2023 and the crisis in Gaza, we analyse the case of Israel-Palestine again in this edition of the report to address the mediation attempts and diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis. The 2022 edition had stopped analysing it due to the chronic standstill of the negotiations, which had

There were 45 peace and negotiating processes around the world in 2023

Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023, accounting for 53% of the cases

been suspended since 2014.

Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023,³ accounting for 53% of the cases. This was a smaller proportion than in the previous year, when 58% of the conflicts had negotiations. The dip was visible in Africa, where the number of conflicts with negotiations fell from 65% in 2023 to 55%, and in Asia and the Pacific, where it decreased from 55% to 44%. In contrast, in the Middle East it rose from 40% to 50%, even if one of the cases, Israel-Palestine, included diplomatic initiatives and attempts at mediation with a brief pause in hostilities in November, though neither a ceasefire nor a resumption of the formal negotiating process were achieved. Overall, the high proportion of armed conflicts with negotiations showed that there were many contexts in which the warring parties explored and opened avenues for negotiation alongside the fighting.

In any case, most armed conflicts were prolonged, in which the similarly long-lived negotiating processes faced serious difficulties in moving towards resolving them.

National governments were involved as one of the **negotiating parties** in all the peace processes and negotiations. These governments negotiated or maintained contact with various kinds of actors directly or indirectly, depending on the characteristics of the context, which in general terms included armed groups (directly or through political representatives, and in some cases through coalitions of armed groups), as was the case in most negotiations in Asia; a combination of armed groups and political and social actors, prevalent in Africa; or representatives of political/military bodies seeking secession or recognition as independent territories, which was true of most cases in Europe. To a lesser extent, cases involving opposition governments and political and social actors were also identified, such as in some of the processes in the Americas. Parallel or complementary negotiations were conducted in a significant number of contexts, linked to armed conflicts and socio-political crises in highly complex scenarios of actors and disputes.

Regarding the **third parties involved in the peace and negotiation processes**, although in many cases it is possible to clearly identify the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment activities, on other occasions these tasks are carried out discreetly or not publicly. At least one third party was involved in the vast majority of the negotiating processes (40 out of 45, or 89%), in a proportion similar to that of previous years (90% in 2022). For another year, there was third-party support for processes under different formats, both in internal (30 of 34, equivalent to 88%), and international

3 Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

Armed conflicts and peace processes in 2023

Armed conflicts with peace negotiations (19)	Armed conflicts without peace negotiations (17)
AFRICA (10)	AFRICA (8)
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) (2018)	Burundi (2015)
CAR (2006)	DRC (east – ADF) (2014)
DRC (east) (1998)	DRC (west)
Ethiopia (Oromia) (2022)	Ethiopia (Amhara) (2023)
Ethiopia (Tigray) (2020)	Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) (2011)
Libya (2011)	Mozambique (north) (2017)
Mali (2012)	Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) (2023)
Somalia (1988)	Western Sahel Region (2018)
South Sudan (2009)	ASIA (5)
Sudan (2023) ⁴	Afghanistan (2001)
AMERICA (1)	India (CPI-M) (1967)
Colombia (1964)	India (Jammu and Kashmir) (1989)
ASIA (4)	Pakistan (2001)
Myanmar (1948)	Pakistan (Balochistan) (2005)
Philippines (NPA) (1969)	EUROPE (1)
Philippines (Mindanao) (1991)	Türkiye (southeast) (1984)
Thailand (south) (2004)	MIDDLE EAST (3)
EUROPE (1)	Egypt (Sinai) (2014)
Russia – Ukraine (2022) ⁵	Iraq (2003)
MIDDLE EAST (3)	Israel – Hezbollah (2023)
Israel – Palestine (2000)	
Syria (2011)	
Yemen (2004)	

*The year the conflict began appears between parentheses

negotiations (15 of 17, also equivalent to 88%). The vast majority of international negotiations had third-party support, which was true of 80% of all peace processes between states. Internal and international dimensions coexisted in some peace processes (five), all with third-party support. At the regional level, while all negotiations that took place in Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East had third-party support, only 50% of the processes in Asia and the Pacific involved third parties. Interstate negotiations between North Korea and South Korea and between North Korea and the United States, as well as internal negotiations in the Philippines (MNLF), India (Assam) and India (Nagaland) took place without third-party support.

In practically all the cases that had a third party (36 of the 40, equivalent to 90%) there was more than one actor performing mediation or facilitation tasks. Thus, in the vast majority of cases there was a set of

actors engaged in mediation, facilitation and support for the dialogue, in some cases with collegiate, complementary and coordinated formulas, and in others, and increasingly, with fragmentation or problems of coordination or competition. In contrast, only one third party was observed in other cases, such as Norway in the process in the Philippines (NDF), the United Nations in the process in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia in Thailand (south) or the UN in the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme. In an international context of multiplicity of mediating actors, these were of diverse types, highlighting intergovernmental organizations –such as the UN, EU, AU and the IGAD, mainly– and state governments, religious organisations and civil society actors, including specialised centres. Intergovernmental organisations played a predominant role, except in Asia and the Pacific, where comparatively they were hardly involved in mediation and facilitation efforts. The United Nations was the main intergovernmental organisation

4 In previous years, two distinct armed conflicts were identified in Sudan: Sudan (Darfur) (2003) and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) (2012). Both conflicts, characterised as internationalised internal and motivated by issues of self-government, resources and identity, are analysed in this edition together within the Sudan armed conflict (2023). This is due to the fact that the dynamics of the armed conflict that began in April 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affect a large part of the country and particularly the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Furthermore, irregular armed actors from these regions are also actively involved in the hostilities.

5 Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian dialogue, Ukraine's dialogue with international actors about parts of its peace plan and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

Internal and international peace processes and negotiations with and without third parties in 2023

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
AFRICA							
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West-South West)		x					
CAR		x					
Chad ⁱ		x	x				
DRC ⁱⁱ		x					x
Etiopia (Oromia)		x					
Ethiopia (Tigray)		x					
Eritrea – Ethiopia							x
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan							x
Libya		x					
Mali		x					
Morocco – Western Sahara							x
Mozambique		x					
Senegal (Casamance)		x					
Somalia		x					
Somalia – Somaliland ⁱⁱⁱ							x
South Sudan		x					
Sudan ^{iv}		x ^v					
Sudan – South Sudan		x					x
AMERICA							
Colombia (ELN)		x					
Colombia (EMC)		x					
Colombia (FARC)		x					
Haiti		x					
Venezuela		x					
Venezuela – Guyana							x
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC							
India (Assam)	x						
India (Nagaland)	x						
Korea, DPR – Korea, Rep. of						x	
Korea, DPR – USA						x	
Myanmar		x					
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)		x					
Philippines (MILF)		x					
Philippines (MNLF)	x						
Philippines (NDF)		x					
Thailand (south)		x					

i. Two previous initiatives are being implemented in Chad: the Doha peace agreement between part of the Chadian insurgency and the government and the commitments made in the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS). There is also a consultation process for the part of the insurgency that did not sign the Doha agreement facilitated by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

ii. There are two peace negotiations at the same time in the DRC, involving the Congolese government and the Rwandan government (Luanda process) and the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country (Nairobi process), both with third-party participation.

iii. Although the Republic of Somaliland is not officially recognised as an independent state, this peace process is considered international because the region enjoys de facto recognition as an autonomous administration independent of Somalia.

iv. In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

v. This refers to the negotiations to resolve intercommunity disputes in the Abyei region and border areas.

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
EUROPE							
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) ^{vi}		x					x
Cyprus		x					
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) ^{vii}							x
Moldova (Transdniestria)		x					
Russia – Ukraine							x
Serbia – Kosovo ^{viii}							x
MIDDLE EAST							
Iran (nuclear programme)							x
Israel – Palestine							x
Palestine		x					
Syria ^{ix}		x					x
Yemen ^x		x					x

vi. In 2023 the dialogue process had two levels. The first were the international negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on normalising their relations, territorial integrity, the delimitation of borders, transport routes and other issues. The second negotiations were between Azerbaijan and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh, though they were unsuccessful. Azerbaijan's military offensive in 2023 dismantled the structures of the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and provoked the exodus of its Armenian population.

vii. The nature of the peace processes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Russia's role in those conflicts, is subject to interpretation. Georgia considers Russia an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

viii. The peace process between Serbia and Kosovo is considered international. Although Kosovo's legal status is still controversial, it has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries. In 2010, the International Court of Justice handed down a non-binding ruling stating that Kosovo's independence did not violate international law or UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

ix. In Syria, there are parallel negotiating processes involving third parties, some of which are also considered actors in the conflict and interested parties in the negotiations.

x. Intra-Yemeni negotiations remained active in 2023 at the request of the UN, though contacts between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia played a greater role during the year.

that participated by supporting peace processes. It was present in different formats and served various support functions in 24 of the 45 processes identified during the year and in 24 of the 40 that involved at least one third party (53% and 60%, respectively).

Other international and regional organisations also played a prominent role, especially regional organisations in their geographical areas of operation. Furthermore, together with intergovernmental organisations, a significant number of states became involved as third parties in negotiating processes, often amidst the projection of national interests in an international dispute for hegemony between powers. In line with the trend seen in previous years, in 2023 Middle Eastern countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Egypt played a significant role not only in the region itself, but also in other peace processes in Africa.

With regard to the **negotiating agendas**, one must consider the particular aspects of each case and bear in mind that the details of the issues under discussion did not always become known to the public. Once again, **the search for truces, ceasefires and cessations of hostilities** was one of the central subjects of discussion in various peace processes. It was a crucial issue in the Palestinian-Israeli context in the first half of the year, then after the significant escalation of

violence starting in October, which activated several different diplomatic initiatives as the weeks passed and alarms about the serious humanitarian crisis and the commission of genocide in Gaza. A ceasefire was also important in the discussions about the future of Yemen, where a de facto cessation of hostilities was maintained during 2023, despite the breakdown of the UN-backed truce agreement. The ceasefire agreements were central to the negotiating processes with both the ELN and EMC. These agreements then led to the establishment of mechanisms to verify compliance. In Africa there were cessations of hostilities and ceasefire agreements in different contexts, like in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia and Tigray, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan or the DRC, in relation to the armed groups in the east of the country and especially M23. In contrast to 2022, in the second year of Russia's invasion, the governments of Russia and Ukraine did not resume negotiations regarding a possible ceasefire and remained at loggerheads.

Other important issues were related to **autonomy, self-determination, independence, administrative-territorial set-up and recognition of the identity** of different minorities. This was true of the processes in Cameroon, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, India (Assam and Nagaland), the Philippines (MILF and MNLF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea

(Bougainville), Thailand (south), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Moldova (Transdniestria), Serbia-Kosovo and others. Most of the negotiations around these issues faced significant obstacles, given many governments' refusal to accept formulas for decentralisation and the recognition of sovereignty. Issues related to the **governance** of countries and political transitions, the distribution of power and elections were also addressed. In Africa, governance issues were present in ongoing negotiations in various contexts, including Chad, Mali, the CAR, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. As in previous years, other topics in the negotiations included **security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants**. These were widely present in negotiating processes in Africa, such as in Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. In Sudan, disagreements between the military parties over reforming the security sector, especially regarding the deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national army and establishing the command structure, spiked tensions and led to fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF paramilitary group.

Regarding the **evolution of peace processes and negotiating processes**, in 2023, most dialogue and negotiating processes suffered setbacks and serious difficulties. The setbacks were largely due to escalations in violence, especially in Mali and Sudan in Africa. In Mali the resumption of clashes in the north of the country between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk. In Sudan the start of a new armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country. In Asia and the Pacific relations between South Korea and North Korea deteriorated significantly during the year, to the point that both countries suspended the 2018 agreement in which both countries had committed to improving their bilateral relations and actively negotiating in favour of reunification. In Europe there was a great setback when Azerbaijan's military offensive eliminated the option of a negotiated solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, forced the exodus of the Armenian population from the enclave and added a new regional and global benchmark for the use of force to settle disputes. In the Middle East, various initiatives to resolve the crisis in Gaza, which witnessed an unprecedented level of violence, failed to achieve a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year and the situation continued to deteriorate in December.

Many negotiating processes also faced serious problems and in some cases ran aground in 2023. In Africa, the processes in Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises. In the Middle East, the negotiating process in Syria continued with no prospects for a political solution to the armed conflict, which reported an escalation in violence at the end of the year. Furthermore, the situation in Gaza had regional repercussions, spreading uncertainty and greater difficulties in other contexts. Thus, by the year's end, the relatively positive prospects in the Yemeni negotiating process were in question due to the regional impact of the crisis in Gaza and the escalation in the Red Sea. Overall, it was not possible to reactivate high-level negotiations in the scenarios in Morocco-Western Sahara, Russia-Ukraine and Cyprus during the year. Despite the setbacks and problems in many negotiating processes, others enjoyed rapprochement and progress, such as in Mozambique, Senegal (Casamance), Ethiopia (Tigray), the Philippines (NDF, MILF, MNLF), Thailand (south) and India (Assam).

In this landscape of obstacles, the rise in polarisation, division and geopolitical confrontation worldwide hampered peacebuilding efforts and increased military approaches to the crises. Conflicts with a great capacity for spillover that were also caught in dynamics of geopolitical confrontation, such as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, as well as the responses to them, revealed challenges such as growing global militarism, double standards, international divisions in responses, the increasing use of force to settle disputes and the weakening of the multilateral system.

Finally, regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, the analysis of the different peace processes in 2023 confirms, like in previous years, the obstacles that women face in participating in formal processes and the difficulties in incorporating a gender perspective in negotiation. **No specific mechanisms of participation were designed for women in most negotiations and gender issues and recognition of the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population were left out of much of the negotiating agendas. There were several processes in which women had the opportunity to participate, though with many limitations**, such as the cases of Somalia-Somaliland, the Philippines, Colombia (ELN), Colombia (EMC), Colombia (FARC), Haiti, Cyprus, Georgia, Moldova. Women's civil society organisations from Sudan, Serbia-Kosovo, Cyprus, Yemen and elsewhere demanded dialogue and inclusion in the negotiating processes.

Main agreements of 2023

Peace processes	Agreements
Colombia (ELN)	In June, the government of Colombia and the ELN reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement by which they committed to putting an end to offensive actions. The agreement was initially valid for 180 days and was planned to begin on 3 August 2023. The agreement also provided for the formation of a Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.
Colombia (EMC)	In October, the government of Colombia and EMC reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement that allowed peace negotiations to officially begin. The ceasefire was initially agreed to be valid from 16 October 2023 to 16 January 2024 and the protocols of the Oversight, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism were also agreed.
Philippines (NDF)	After six years of impasse in the negotiating process, in late November the government of the Philippines and the NDF signed the Oslo Joint Communiqué by which they committed to resolving the armed conflict peacefully and to establishing a negotiating framework that would lead to a peace agreement.
Israel – Palestine	After Qatar's mediation, supported by Egypt and the USA, the Israeli government and Hamas reached an agreement to temporarily suspend hostilities that remained in force between 24 and 30 November 2023. The initial agreement was planned to last for four days, during which the release of 50 hostages captured by Hamas was scheduled to occur in exchange for the release of 150 Palestinian prisoners. The mechanism, which was designed to encourage an extension of the agreement beyond this initial period, also provided access to humanitarian aid and fuel in the Gaza Strip. The agreement was extended, first for 48 hours, then for another 24, and led to the release of over 100 people held by Hamas (86 Israelis and 24 foreigners) and the release of nearly 240 Palestinian women and children, many of them detained by Israel under the controversial label of “administrative detention”. The exchange was assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross.
Senegal (Casamance)	In May, a peace agreement was signed with a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance MFDC faction, called the Diakaye faction. The signing ceremony was attended by the envoy of President Macky Sall; the mayors of Ziguinchor, Bindiona and Douloulou, the commander of the Diakaye faction, Fatoma Coly; and members of the international community. For the past three years, civil society organisations based in Ziguinchor devoted to peacebuilding in the Senegambia region under the Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC) have been mediating between the parties. The agreement provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the delivery of birth certificates to people who did not have access to them due to the instability and measures to ensure the peaceful return of all refugees.
Serbia – Kosovo	The president of Serbia and the prime minister of Kosovo gave verbal support to the Agreement on the Path towards the Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia on 27 February, as well as its implementation annex (Ohrid Agreement) of 18 March, both proposed by the EU and supported by Kosovo and Serbia as part of the dialogue process facilitated by the EU. The February agreement, with 11 articles, included issues such as the parties' commitment to mutual recognition of their respective national documents and symbols, without requiring Serbia to formally recognise Kosovo as a state; Serbia's non-objection to Kosovo's entry into international organisations; both parties' pledge to establish ways to ensure an “appropriate level” of self-government for the Kosovo Serb community; an obligation to implement previous agreements; and the continuation of EU-facilitated talks to reach a legally binding agreement for the comprehensive normalisation of relations. The March annex included content and procedural aspects. Despite the verbal support for the agreement and the annex, difficulties arose very quickly, hand in hand with disagreements on substantive issues.
Sudan	The warring parties (SAF and RSF) agreed to and signed the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan on 11 May. It was the result of the “pre-negotiation talks” promoted and mediated by the US and Saudi Arabia in the city of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on 6 May. However, despite the achievement of this declaration, the parties to the conflict continued to commit violence against the civilian population.
Sudan – South Sudan	At the intercommunity level, agreements were reached between communities in the Abyei region during the year. First, the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities agreed to an end to hostilities, a ceasefire, the deployment of security forces in the disputed areas to create a buffer zone and freedom of movement between the areas affected by tensions in the southern part of the Abyei area and the northern part of Warrap State (South Sudan). Second, the Dinka Ngok and Miseriya communities signed an agreement that included a cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, the need to reactivate the joint community peace committee and the continuation of the peace talks. The agreement was reached as part of a peace conference between the parties between 20 and 23 March in Todach (Abyei area).
Venezuela – Guyana	In mid-December, shortly after the escalation of the diplomatic crisis that was caused by the Venezuelan referendum on the disputed territory of Essequibo, the presidents of both countries met in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and signed the Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace, by which they committed not to threaten each other or use force against each other, to refrain from escalating the conflict and to cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground (and, if they occur, to immediately communicate with each other, and also with CARICOM, CELAC and the president of Brazil). President Maduro and President Ali also committed to establishing a joint commission of foreign ministers to address mutually agreed upon issues, to continue the dialogue on the dispute and to meet again in Brazil in the next three months. Finally, it was agreed that any dispute between the two countries would be resolved in accordance with international law, including the 1966 Geneva Agreement. At the same time, however, Guyana clearly expressed its commitment to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice to resolve the border controversy.

Regional trends

Africa

- Throughout 2023, there were 18 peace processes and negotiations identified in Africa, which accounts for practically 40% of the 45 peace processes worldwide.
- The resumption of clashes in northern Mali between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk.
- In Mozambique, the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed.
- Progress was made in the implementation of the 2022 peace agreement between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, although atrocities continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and the Fano militias against the civilian population.
- Amidst the violence in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, peace talks began between Ethiopia and the armed group OLA in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya.
- Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan resumed the talks on the dispute over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), but no progress was made in the different negotiating rounds.
- The agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland over the possible future official recognition of Somaliland threatened to destabilise the Horn of Africa and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland.
- The escalation of the offensive by the Congolese armed group M23 in October, supported by Rwanda, caused a spike in tension between the DRC and Rwanda, while regional initiatives for a negotiated solution failed.
- The start of a new armed conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country.

America

- In America there were six negotiations during 2023, 13% of the world total.
- In Haiti, CARICOM led negotiations between the government and opposition political and social organisations to try to forge a more inclusive transition, organise new elections and address the political and security crisis.
- Peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the ELN continued amid significant

obstacles, but with notable results, such as a ceasefire agreement and the ELN's commitment to put an end to kidnappings for ransom.

- For the first time in a peace process in Colombia, a woman was named the head of the government's negotiating delegation, with Vera Grabe leading the negotiations with the ELN.
- Alongside the direct talks between the governments of Venezuela and the United States, Caracas and the Unitary Platform reached two important agreements in Barbados in mid-October, facilitated by Norway.
- The presidents of Venezuela and Guyana met directly at the request of CARICOM, CELAC and the government of Brazil to address the escalation of the historical territorial dispute over the Essequibo region.

Asia and the Pacific

- In Asia and the Pacific there were 10 negotiation processes, 23% of the total cases in the world
- After a six-year hiatus, the Philippine government and the NDF signed a joint statement in November pledging to try to resolve the armed conflict through dialogue.
- The Philippine government entered into negotiations with the two main factions of the MNLF regarding the full implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement, the participation of the MNLF in the government of the Bangsamoro region and the reintegration of MNLF fighters.
- In southern Thailand, the government and the BRN signed a road map, the BRN accepted that other armed groups may participate in the negotiations, Malaysia appointed a new facilitator and the government appointed a new negotiating team.
- The government of Myanmar and the armed group MNDAA reached a ceasefire agreement in December that failed to end the most serious escalation of violence in the country since the 2021 coup.
- North Korea and South Korea closed the door to any dialogue on the reunification of both countries.

Europe

- In 2023, six of the 45 peace processes in the world (13%) took place in Europe.
- In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that broke down in April 2022 and talks only continued on limited matters.
- An Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh forced almost its entire population to flee and the enclave was reintegrated by force into Azerbaijan.
- Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious

problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo.

- In most of the negotiating processes in the region, women's organisations and female activists and experts demanded and recommended women's greater participation in dialogue mechanisms, in the face of long-stalled processes and the deteriorating regional geopolitical context.

Middle East

- The Middle East was the scene of five peace processes and negotiations in 2023, accounting for 11% of all cases worldwide.

- The difficulties in reviving the deal on the Iranian nuclear programme became clear throughout 2023 amidst an impasse in the negotiations and rising tensions between the parties involved.
- In 2023, a series of factors encouraged expectations of a historic opportunity to address the Yemeni conflict, but by the end of the year the prospects were in doubt due to the regional impact of the Gaza crisis and the escalation in the Red Sea.
- Thirty years after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian-Israeli issue returned to the centre of international attention and various initiatives had not achieved a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year.
- In Syria, the different negotiating formats between multiple local, regional and international actors yielded no progress towards a political solution to the conflict.

Introduction

Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios is a yearbook that analyses the peace processes and negotiations that took place in the world in 2023. The examination of the evolution and the dynamics of these negotiations at a global level offers a global view of the peace processes, identifying trends and facilitating a comparative analysis among the different scenarios. One of the main aims of this report is to provide information and analysis for those actors who take part in the peaceful resolution of conflicts at different levels, including those parties in dispute, mediators and civil society, among others. The yearbook also seeks to reveal the different formulas of dialogue and negotiation that are aimed at reversing the dynamics of violence and that aim to channel conflicts through political means in numerous contexts. As such, it seeks to highlight, enhance and promote political, diplomatic and social efforts that are aimed at transforming conflicts and their root causes through peaceful methods.

With regard to **methodology**, this report draws mainly from on qualitative analysis of studies and information from numerous sources –the United Nations, international organizations, research centres, the media, NGOs, and others–, in addition to experience gained in field research. The report also incorporates the gender perspective in the study and analysis of peace processes in a cross-cutting manner.

The analysis is based on a **definition** that understands **peace processes** as comprising all those political, diplomatic and social efforts aimed at resolving conflicts and transforming their root causes by means of peaceful methods, especially through peace negotiations. **Peace**

negotiations are considered as the processes of dialogue between at least two conflicting parties in a conflict, in which the parties address their differences in a concerted framework in order to end the violence and encounter a satisfactory solution to their demands. Other actors not directly involved in the conflict may also participate. Peace negotiations are usually preceded by preliminary or exploratory phases that define the format, place, conditions and guarantees, of the future negotiations, among other elements. Peace negotiations may or may not be facilitated by **third parties**. The third parties intervene in the dispute so as to contribute to the dialogue between the actors involved and to promote a negotiated solution to the conflict. Other actors not directly involved in the dispute may also participate in peace negotiations. Peace negotiations may result in comprehensive or partial **agreements**, agreements related to the procedure or process, and agreements linked to the causes or consequences of the conflict. Elements of the different type of agreements may be combined in the same agreement.

With respect to its **structure**, the publication is organized into six chapters. The first presents a summary of those processes and negotiations that took place in 2023, and offers an overview of the main trends at a global level. The following five chapters detail the analysis of peace processes and negotiations from a geographic perspective. Each addresses the main trends of peace negotiations in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, respectively, and describes the development and dynamics of each of the cases present in the regions, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda.

1. Negotiations in 2023: global overview and main trends

- During 2023, there were 45 peace processes and negotiations around the world, six more than the year before. Most cases were found in Africa (18), followed by Asia and the Pacific (10), Europe (six), America (six) and the Middle East (five).
- Negotiations were under way in 19 of the 36 armed conflicts active during 2023, accounting for 53% of all cases.
- Third parties were involved in 89% of the negotiating processes and the UN participated in 60% of the processes that had at least one third party.
- There were serious setbacks to the prospects for dialogue in various contexts due to the resumption or escalation of violence, such as in Mali, Sudan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Israel-Palestine, while the vast majority of negotiating processes faced obstacles and difficulties.
- The rise in global polarisation and division and geopolitical confrontation hindered peacebuilding efforts and increased military approaches to the crises.
- Specific mechanisms were not designed for women to participate in most of the negotiations and gender issues and recognition of the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population were left out of many negotiating agendas.

During 2023, a total of 45 peace processes and negotiations were identified on a worldwide level. The analysis of the different contexts reveals a wide variety of realities and dynamics, a result of the diverse nature of the armed conflicts¹ and socio-political crises² that the negotiations are linked to. Without losing sight of the need to consider the specific characteristics of each case, it is possible to draw several conclusions and offer reflections on the general panorama of peace processes and negotiations, as well as to identify some trends. Several conclusions are presented below regarding the geographical distribution of the negotiations, those actors involved in the negotiation processes, the third parties who participated, the main and recurrent issues in the negotiation agendas, the general development of the processes, inclusiveness and the gender dimension in these peace negotiations.

Table 1.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
AFRICA		
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	Government of Cameroon; four interim governments (IGs) proclaiming themselves representative of the people of Ambazonia: IG Sisiku (Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, first President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and Vice President Dabney Yerima); the other three IGs are derived from IG Sisiku, each created after the previous IG refused to give up power: IG Sako (Samuel Sako); IG Marianta (Iya Marianta Njomia); IG Chris Anu (ally of Leke Olivier Fongunueh's Red Dragons armed group). The Ambazonia Governing Council coalition (AGovC, led by Cho Ayaba, armed wing Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF). Other political, military and social movements, and religious groups: Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), which includes APLM/SOCADEF, FSCW, MoRISC, SCARM, SCAPO, SCNC (North America faction) and RoAN.	Church, civil society organisations, USIP, Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN), Vatican, Canada, USA

1. The School of the Culture of Peace (Escola de Cultura de Pau, ECP) defines armed conflict as any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible in which the continuous and organised use of violence a) causes a minimum of 100 battle-related deaths in a year and/or a serious impact on the territory (destruction of infrastructures or of natural resources) and human security (e.g. wounded or displaced population, sexual violence, food insecurity, impact on mental health and on the social fabric or disruption of basic services) and aims to achieve objectives that are different than those of common delinquency and are normally linked to a) demands for self-determination and self-government or identity issues; b) the opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state or the internal or international policy of the government, which in both cases leads to fighting to seize or erode power; or c) control over the resources or the territory.
2. A socio-political crisis is defined as that in which the pursuit of certain objectives or the failure to satisfy certain demands made by different actors leads to high levels of political, social or military mobilisation and/or the use of violence with a level of intensity that does not reach that of an armed conflict and that may include clashes, repression, coups d'état and bombings or attacks of other kinds, and whose escalation may degenerate into an armed conflict under certain circumstances. Socio-political crises are normally related to: a) demands for self-determination and self-government, or identity issues; b) opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state, or the internal or international policies of a government, which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or c) control of resources or territory.

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
AFRICA		
	Southern Cameroons Stakeholder Platform (SCSP), which includes political movements, civil society, armed groups, religious groups: IG Sisiku, SCNC (except the North America faction), Consortium, Global Takumbeng, SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, SCCOP, AIPC, AYC, SCYC, SCCAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, Reach Out, prisoners organisations, displaced population and refugee organisations, traditional leaders and others.	
CAR	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Séléka coalition, anti-balaka militias	The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation (AU and ECCAS, with the support of the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Rep. of the Congo and Chad), Community of Sant'Egidio, ACCORD, OIC, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, China, Russia, Sudan
Chad	Doha process: Transitional Military Council, 52 armed groups, including the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCSMR), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) DNIS: Transitional Military Council, civil society organisations, 34 of the 52 armed groups that signed the Doha process The 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement formed the Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), including the FACT and the CCSMR	Qatar; AU and UN, among others; Community of Sant'Egidio, ECCAS
DRC	Government of the DRC, government of Rwanda, armed group M23, armed groups from the eastern part of the country, political opposition and civil society	AU, SADC, ICGLR, EAC, EU, UN, OIF, USA, Angola, Qatar
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Eritrea and Ethiopia	United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, USA
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Federal government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)	IGAD, Kenya, Norway and Tanzania
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Federal Government, political and military authorities of the Ethiopian region of Tigray (Tigray People's Liberation Front)	AU, USA, IGAD
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan	AU, World Bank (WB), UAE, EU and USA
Libya	Government of National Unity (GNU), Government of National Stability (GNS), Presidential Council, High State Council (HSC), House of Representatives (HoR), LNA/ALAF	UN; Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Türkiye, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia (Berlin Process)
Mali	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) that brings together Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) –MNLA, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, civil society organisations, Mauritania, Carter Center (Independent Observer of the Peace Agreement)
Morocco – Western Sahara	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)	UN, Algeria and Mauritania, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Mozambique	Government, RENAMO, RENAMO military junta	AU, National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Senegal (Casamance)	Government, factions of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)	ECOWAS, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC)
Somalia	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest), political military movement Ahlu Sunna WalJama'a, clan and sub-clan leaders, Somaliland	UN, IGAD, Türkiye, AU
Somalia – Somaliland	Federal Government of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland	Türkiye, Norway
South Sudan	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): Government (SPLM), SPLM/A-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others), two independent factions of the SPLM-IO: the Kitwang faction led by Simon Gatwech Dual and the faction headed by General Johnson Olony. Peace talks in Rome: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously SSOMA): National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the Real SPLM, South Sudan People's Patriotic Movement (SSPPM).	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): IGAD Plus (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda), AU (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), China, Russia, Egypt, Troika (USA, United Kingdom and Norway), EU, UN, South Sudan Council of Churches Rome negotiations: Community of Sant'Egidio

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
AFRICA		
Sudan³	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government of Sudan, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur), Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu factions National crisis peace negotiations: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, IGAD, UNITAMS National crisis peace negotiations: Trilateral mechanism (UNITAMS, AU and IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)); Quad (USA, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Egypt
Sudan – South Sudan	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan, Ethnic communities of the Abyei region	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU, UNISFA, UN
AMERICA		
Colombia (ELN)	Government, ELN	Guarantor countries (Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, Mexico and Chile); permanent supporters (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, Episcopal Conference of Colombia); supporting countries (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain)
Colombia (EMC)	Government, Estado Mayor Central (EMC)	Permanent supporters (Episcopal Conference of Colombia, World Council of Churches, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia), guarantor countries (Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, Venezuela)
Colombia (FARC)	Government, Comunes	UN Verification Mission in Colombia, International Verification Component (Technical Secretariat of the Notables, University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute)
Haiti	Government, social and political opposition	CARICOM Eminent Persons Group
Venezuela	Government, social and political opposition	Norway, Russia, the Netherlands
Venezuela – Guyana	Venezuela, Guyana	CELAC, CARICOM, Brazil, United Nations, Cuba
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC		
North Korea – South Korea	North Korea, South Korea	--
North Korea – USA	North Korea, USA	--
Philippines (MILF)	Government, MILF, Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Malaysia, Third Party Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
Philippines (MNLF)	Government, MNLF (factions led by Nur Misuari and Muslimin Sema)	--
Philippines (NDF)	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of various communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political arm of the NPA)	Norway
India (Assam)	Government, ULFA-PTF, ULFA-I; AANLA, AANLA (FG), BCF, BCF (BT), STF, ACMA, ACMA (FG) and APA	--
India (Nagaland)	Indian government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/GDRN/NA, ZUF	--
Myanmar	Government; armed groups that have signed the ceasefire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU, KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP and LDU; armed groups that have not signed the NCA: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/ SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA and MNDAA	China, ASEAN
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Government, Autonomous Bougainville Government	United Nations
Thailand (south)	Government, BRN	Malaysia

3 In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

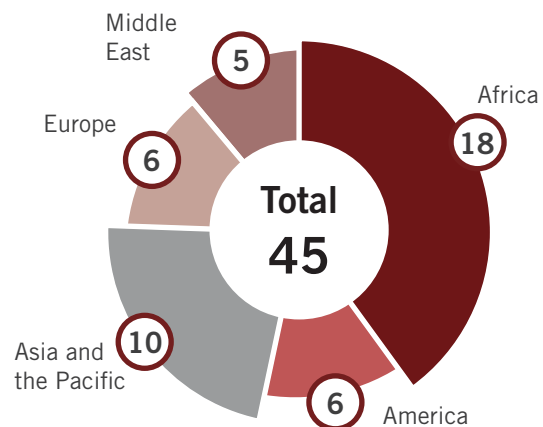
Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
EUROPE		
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, representatives of self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh	EU, USA, Russia, Iran, Türkiye, Georgia ⁴
Cyprus	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	UN, EU, Guarantor Countries (Türkiye, Greece and United Kingdom)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ⁵	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ⁶
Moldova (Transnistria)	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA, EU ⁷
Russia – Ukraine	Russia, Ukraine	UN, Türkiye, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, ICRC, IAEA, Vatican City, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia ⁸
Serbia – Kosovo	Serbia, Kosovo	EU, UN, USA, Germany, France, Italy
MIDDLE EAST		
Iran (nuclear programme)	Iran, France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, EU, USA ⁹	UN
Israel – Palestine	Israel, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Authority (PA)	Qatar, Egypt, USA, France, UN, ¹⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Palestine	Fatah, Hamas	Egypt, Türkiye
Syria	Government, political and armed opposition groups, regional and international actors ¹¹	UN (Geneva process); Russia, Türkiye, Iran (Astana process with Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, UN and ICRC as observers); Arab League (Jordanian initiative)
Yemen	Internationally recognised Yemeni government (backed by Riyadh), Houthis / Ansar Allah, Saudi Arabia ¹²	ONU, Oman, CICR

The peace negotiations in bold type are described in the chapter.
 -- There are no third parties or no public proof of their existence.

Regarding the **geographical distribution of the peace processes and negotiations** in 2023, most of the cases analyzed were concentrated in Africa, which hosted 18, equivalent to 40% of the total. Asia and the Pacific was the region with the second-highest number of cases, with a total of 10, representing 23% of the negotiations in 2023. The rest of the negotiations were distributed between the Americas and Europe, with six cases each (13%), and the Middle East, with five (11%).

There was a rise in the number of peace processes and negotiations worldwide, in keeping with the upward trend of the previous two years (37 processes in 2021, 39 in 2022), though the levels of 2018 and 2019 were

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of peace negotiations



4 Iran and Türkiye are included in this table due to their participation in the 3+3 regional platform. This platform was launched in 2021 at Türkiye's behest with the stated objective of promoting peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It brings together Türkiye, Russia, Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though invited, Georgia has not yet participated in this format. In 2020, Russia and Türkiye established a joint monitoring centre for the 2020 ceasefire. However, the status of Türkiye and the 3+3 platform as third parties may be subject to different interpretations. Since 2023, the OSCE Minsk Group has not been included in this table as it has become inoperative. It was co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States; the rest of its permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Türkiye. On the other hand, Georgia is included in this table because it facilitated dialogue between the parties in conflict in 2023.

5 Russia's status in the Georgian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

6 Ibid.

7 In 2023, the 5+2 conference format remained inactive. In the 5+2 conference the OSCE was a mediator, Ukraine and Russia were mediators-guarantors, and the US and the EU were observers. The OSCE-facilitated 1+1 format was active and was also attended by participants of the 5+2 format.

8 This table includes actors playing roles of mediation/facilitation and support in any of the areas of dialogue active between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. They are included regardless of the frequency or scope of their involvement. In 2022, the actors playing some role included in this table were: Türkiye, the UN, Israel, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the IAEA, the OSCE, Germany and France. Beyond the actors listed in this table, this chapter analyses and includes other actors that promoted dialogue during the year and are not considered third parties in this yearbook.

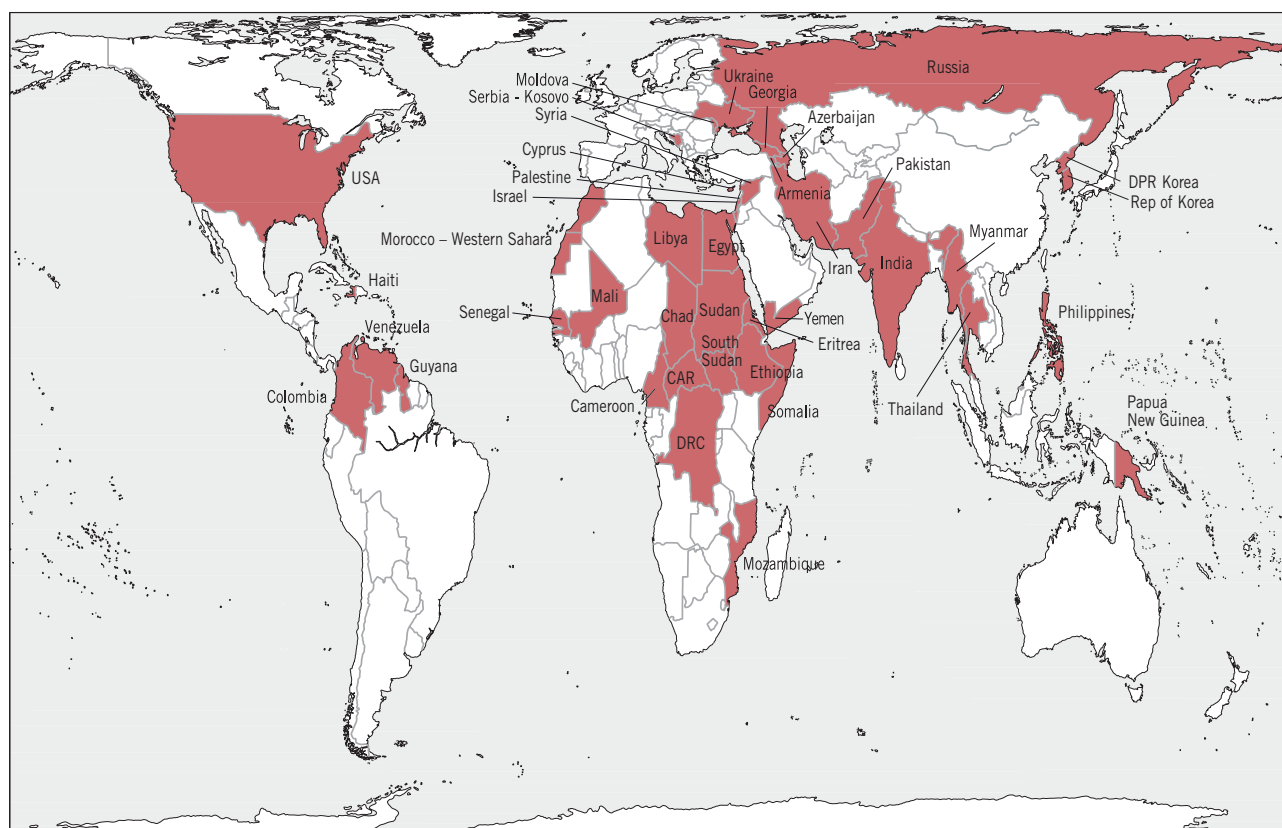
9 In 2018 the Trump administration decided to withdraw the US from the nuclear agreement and reimpose sanctions on Iran. The Biden administration has remained indirectly involved in the negotiating process with Tehran.

10 This table does not include the Middle East Peace Quartet - made up of the US, Russia, the UN and the EU - due to its inactivity in the field of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, especially since the increase in tensions between Washington and Moscow over the war in Ukraine. The last statement by the Quartet envoys dates back to the end of 2021. The Quartet Office remains operational in Jerusalem but focuses its activities on the part of its mandate related to supporting Palestinian economic and institutional development.

11 Although some regional and international actors present themselves as third parties, in practice they also operate as negotiators and favour understandings to ensure their presence and influence on Syrian soil.

12 Saudi Arabia also plays a role as a mediator/facilitator in disputes between various actors on the anti-Houthi side.

Map 1.1. Peace negotiations in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in 2023

not reached (49 and 50 cases, respectively). However, this increase was not accompanied by lower levels of violence and global armed conflict. On the contrary, the total number of active armed conflicts also increased during the year (36 armed conflicts in 2023, compared to 33 in 2022) and violence got worse in Israel-Palestine and in high-intensity conflicts such as those in Sudan, Mali, Western Sahel, the DRC, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan and elsewhere. In addition, there were other conflicts trending similarly in 2023 to the previous year but with high levels of violence, such as in the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Ethiopia (Oromia), Russia-Ukraine and Syria. The increase in the number of processes took place mainly in Africa (18 cases in 2023 compared to 15 in 2022, 12 in 2021 and 13 in 2020). The three new processes in Africa were negotiations between the federal government of Ethiopia and representatives of the armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Tanzania; the resumption of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) dispute; and the relaunch of international contacts and initiatives to promote dialogue and reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland. In the Americas, two more cases

Most negotiations in 2023 took place in Africa (40%), followed by Asia and the Pacific (23%), America and Europe (both 13%) and the Middle East (11%)

were identified than the previous year, as a new peace process began in Colombia between the government and the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) and talks started between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana regarding their territorial dispute over the Essequibo region. Finally, in the Middle East, after the events of 2023 and the crisis in Gaza, we analyse the case of Israel-Palestine again in this edition of the report to address the mediation attempts and diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis. The 2022 edition had stopped analysing it due to the chronic standstill of the negotiations, which had been suspended since 2014.¹³

Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023,¹⁴ accounting for 53% of the cases. This was a smaller proportion than in the previous year, when 58% of the conflicts had negotiations. The dip was visible in Africa, where the number of conflicts with negotiations fell from 65% in 2023 to 55%, and in Asia and the Pacific, where it decreased from 55% to 44%. In contrast, in the Middle East it rose from 40% to 50%, even if one of the cases, Israel-Palestine, included diplomatic initiatives and attempts at mediation with a brief pause in hostilities in

13 See the chapter on the Middle East in this report.

14 Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

Table 1.2. **Armed conflicts and peace processes in 2023**

Armed conflicts with peace negotiations (19)	Armed conflicts without peace negotiations (17)
AFRICA (10)	AFRICA (8)
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) (2018)	Burundi (2015)
CAR (2006)	DRC (east – ADF) (2014)
DRC (east) (1998)	DRC (west)
Ethiopia (Oromia) (2022)	Ethiopia (Amhara) (2023)
Ethiopia (Tigray) (2020)	Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) (2011)
Libya (2011)	Mozambique (north) (2017)
Mali (2012)	Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) (2023)
Somalia (1988)	Western Sahel Region (2018)
South Sudan (2009)	ASIA (5)
Sudan (2023) ¹⁵	Afghanistan (2001)
AMERICA (1)	India (CPI-M) (1967)
Colombia (1964)	India (Jammu and Kashmir) (1989)
ASIA (4)	Pakistan (2001)
Myanmar (1948)	Pakistan (Balochistan) (2005)
Philippines (NPA) (1969)	EUROPE (1)
Philippines (Mindanao) (1991)	Türkiye (southeast) (1984)
Thailand (south) (2004)	MIDDLE EAST (3)
EUROPE (1)	Egypt (Sinai) (2014)
Russia – Ukraine (2022) ¹⁶	Iraq (2003)
MIDDLE EAST (3)	Israel – Hezbollah (2023)
Israel – Palestine (2000)	
Syria (2011)	
Yemen (2004)	

*The year the conflict began appears between parentheses

November, though neither a ceasefire nor a resumption of the formal negotiating process were achieved. Overall, the high proportion of armed conflicts with negotiations showed that there were many contexts in which the warring parties explored and opened avenues for negotiation alongside the fighting. In any case, most armed conflicts were prolonged, in which the similarly long-lived negotiating processes faced serious difficulties in moving towards resolving them.

National governments were involved as one of the **negotiating parties** in all the peace processes and negotiations. These governments negotiated or maintained contact with various kinds of actors directly or indirectly, depending on the characteristics of the context, which in general terms included armed groups (directly or through political

representatives, and in some cases through coalitions of armed groups), as was the case in most negotiations in Asia; a combination of armed groups and political and social actors, prevalent in Africa; or representatives of political/military bodies seeking secession or recognition as independent territories, which was true of most cases in Europe. To a lesser extent, cases involving opposition governments and political and social actors were also identified, such as in some of the processes in the Americas.

Parallel or complementary negotiations were conducted in a significant number of contexts, linked to armed conflicts and socio-political crises in highly complex scenarios of actors and disputes. For example, in Chad the peace process encompassed dialogue about the implementation of the Doha peace agreement between

Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023, accounting for 53% of the cases

15 In previous years, two distinct armed conflicts were identified in Sudan: Sudan (Darfur) (2003) and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) (2012). Both conflicts, characterised as internationalised internal and motivated by issues of self-government, resources and identity, are analysed in this edition together within the Sudan armed conflict (2023). This is due to the fact that the dynamics of the armed conflict that began in April 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affect a large part of the country and particularly the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Furthermore, irregular armed actors from these regions are also actively involved in the hostilities.

16 Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian dialogue, Ukraine's dialogue with international actors about parts of its peace plan and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

the government and a part of the Chadian insurgency, the implementation of the commitments resulting from the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS) and communication channels with some of the insurgent groups that did not sign the Doha agreement. In Sudan, the dialogue in 2023 was focused on addressing the crisis between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which took place alongside the negotiations on the dynamics of conflict in Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile). In the South Sudan peace process, there were channels of dialogue with actors linked to the 2018 peace agreement, as well as parallel negotiations in Rome with groups that did not sign it. The Sudan-South Sudan process encompassed inter-state negotiations as well as forums of dialogue between communities in the Abyei region. There were two separate peace negotiations related to the DRC: between the Congolese government and the Rwandan government (Luanda process) and between the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country (Nairobi process). In Yemen, the UN-backed intra-Yemeni negotiations continued to be held, although the contacts between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis took centre stage during 2023. In Syria, both the UN-backed Geneva process and the Astana process (led by Russia, Türkiye and Iran) remained in force. The Syrian government participated in both formats, though with different levels of involvement in each. Other examples of processes with more complex forms of dialogue due to the network of actors were those in Cameroon, Libya, Somalia, India (Assam), India (Nagaland) and Myanmar. The negotiations in Venezuela and Haiti also involved various actors in parallel and complementary negotiations.

Several negotiating processes that took place throughout 2023 were negotiations where at least part of their dimension was international, that involved international negotiating actors (see Table 1.2). This was true in 17 cases: Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC (one of whose dialogue channels involves the Congolese government and the Rwandan government), Somalia-Somaliland, Sudan-South Sudan, Venezuela-Guyana, North Korea-South Korea, North Korea-USA, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (which also involves Russia as an actor in the negotiations), Russia-Ukraine, Serbia-Kosovo, Iran (nuclear programme), Israel-Palestine,

In 2023, there were 45 peace processes and negotiations around the world, six more than the year before, though the number of conflicts increased and violence intensified in many crises during the year

Parallel or complementary negotiating channels were active in a significant number of contexts, linked to a global scenario of highly complex armed conflicts

Syria¹⁷ and Yemen¹⁸. In any case, international negotiations coexisted with internal dialogue channels in five of these cases (the DRC, Sudan-South Sudan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Syria and Yemen). At the same time, some international processes were unique, such as the negotiations between Morocco and Western Sahara, since Western Sahara consists of a territory that the UN considers pending decolonisation whose possession by Morocco is not recognised by international law or by any United Nations resolution. At the same time, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)

proclaimed by the POLISARIO Front has not been internationally recognized by the majority of states. Similarly, in the case of Serbia-Kosovo, though Kosovo proclaimed itself an independent country in 2008 and is recognised as such by 100 countries, the dispute over the status of Kosovo continued. In 2023, there were 34 internal negotiating processes, practically all of which were between the parties in conflict with support of third parties (30), and to a lesser extent without third parties (three cases), while only one national dialogue was reported, Chad’s National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS).

Regarding the **third parties involved in the peace and negotiation processes**, although in many cases it is possible to clearly identify the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment activities, on other occasions these tasks are carried out discreetly or not publicly. At least one third party was involved in the vast majority of the negotiating processes (40 out of 45, or 89%), in a proportion similar to that of previous years (90% in 2022). For another year, there was third-party support for processes under different formats, both in internal (30 of 34, equivalent to 88%), and international negotiations (15 of 17, also equivalent to 88%) (See Table 1.2.). The vast majority of international negotiations had third-party support, which was true of 80% of all peace processes between states. As noted above, internal and international dimensions coexisted in some peace processes (five), all with third-party support.

At the regional level, while all negotiations that took place in Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East had third-party support, only 50% of the processes in Asia and the Pacific involved third parties. Interstate negotiations between North Korea and South Korea and between North Korea and the United States, as well as

17 In Syria, there are parallel negotiating processes involving third parties, some of which are also considered actors in the conflict and interested parties in the negotiations.

18 Intra-Yemeni negotiations remained active in 2023 at the request of the UN, though contacts between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia played a greater role during the year.

Table 1.3. Internal and international peace processes and negotiations with and without third parties in 2023

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
AFRICA							
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West-South West)		x					
CAR		x					
Chad ⁱ		x	x				
DRC ⁱⁱ		x					x
Etiopia (Oromia)		x					
Ethiopia (Tigray)		x					
Eritrea – Ethiopia							x
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan							x
Libya		x					
Mali		x					
Morocco – Western Sahara							x
Mozambique		x					
Senegal (Casamance)		x					
Somalia		x					
Somalia – Somaliland ⁱⁱⁱ							x
South Sudan		x					
Sudan ^{iv}		x ^v					
Sudan – South Sudan		x					x
AMERICA							
Colombia (ELN)		x					
Colombia (EMC)		x					
Colombia (FARC)		x					
Haiti		x					
Venezuela		x					
Venezuela – Guyana							x
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC							
India (Assam)	x						
India (Nagaland)	x						
Korea, DPR – Korea, Rep. of						x	
Korea, DPR – USA						x	
Myanmar		x					
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)		x					
Philippines (MILF)		x					
Philippines (MNLF)	x						
Philippines (NDF)		x					
Thailand (south)		x					

i. Two previous initiatives are being implemented in Chad: the Doha peace agreement between part of the Chadian insurgency and the government and the commitments made in the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS). There is also a consultation process for the part of the insurgency that did not sign the Doha agreement facilitated by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

ii. There are two peace negotiations at the same time in the DRC, involving the Congolese government and the Rwandan government (Luanda process) and the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country (Nairobi process), both with third-party participation.

iii. Although the Republic of Somaliland is not officially recognised as an independent state, this peace process is considered international because the region enjoys de facto recognition as an autonomous administration independent of Somalia.

iv. In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

v. This refers to the negotiations to resolve intercommunity disputes in the Abyei region and border areas.

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
EUROPE							
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) ^{vi}		x					x
Cyprus		x					
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) ^{vii}							x
Moldova (Transdniestria)		x					
Russia – Ukraine							x
Serbia – Kosovo ^{viii}							x
MIDDLE EAST							
Iran (nuclear programme)							x
Israel – Palestine							x
Palestine		x					
Syria ^{ix}		x					x
Yemen ^x		x					x

vi. In 2023 the dialogue process had two levels. The first were the international negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on normalising their relations, territorial integrity, the delimitation of borders, transport routes and other issues. The second negotiations were between Azerbaijan and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh, though they were unsuccessful. Azerbaijan's military offensive in 2023 dismantled the structures of the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and provoked the exodus of its Armenian population.

vii. The nature of the peace processes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Russia's role in those conflicts, is subject to interpretation. Georgia considers Russia an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

viii. The peace process between Serbia and Kosovo is considered international. Although Kosovo's legal status is still controversial, it has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries. In 2010, the International Court of Justice handed down a non-binding ruling stating that Kosovo's independence did not violate international law or UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

ix. In Syria, there are parallel negotiating processes involving third parties, some of which are also considered actors in the conflict and interested parties in the negotiations.

x. Intra-Yemeni negotiations remained active in 2023 at the request of the UN, though contacts between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia played a greater role during the year.

internal negotiations in the Philippines (MNLF), India (Assam) and India (Nagaland) took place without third-party support.

In practically all the cases that had a third party (36 of the 40, equivalent to 90%) there was more than one actor performing mediation or facilitation tasks. Thus, in the vast majority of cases there was a set of actors engaged in mediation, facilitation and support for the dialogue, in some cases with collegiate, complementary and coordinated formulas, and in others, and increasingly, with fragmentation or problems of coordination or competition. In contrast, only one third party was observed in other cases, such as Norway in the process in the Philippines (NDF), the United Nations in the process in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia in Thailand (south) or the UN in the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme.

In an international context of multiplicity of mediating actors, these were of diverse types, highlighting intergovernmental organizations –such as the UN, EU, AU and the IGAD, mainly– and state governments, religious organisations and civil society actors, including specialised centres. Intergovernmental organisations played a predominant role, except in Asia and the Pacific, where comparatively they were hardly involved in mediation and facilitation efforts. In line

with the trend established in recent years, the United Nations was the main intergovernmental organisation that participated by supporting peace processes. It was present in different formats (mainly envoys and special representatives and missions) and served various support functions (mediation, co-mediation, verification, ceasefire supervision, assistance, support, the use of good offices and others) in 24 of the 45 processes identified during the year and in 24 of the 40 that involved at least one third party (53% and 60%, respectively). This was a slight dip compared to 2022, in which the UN participated as a third party in 54% of all processes and in 60% of dialogues that had at least a third party. Once again in 2023, the UN was heavily involved in the processes in Africa, where it provided support for 11 of the 18 cases: Chad, Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan and South Sudan. However, it was less involved than in the previous year (it participated in 61% of the processes in Africa in 2023, compared to 73% in 2022). This was due to the increase in the number of processes in Africa in which the warring parties opted for other third parties in 2023, such as those in Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan and Somalia-Somaliland.

Other international and regional organisations also played a prominent role, especially regional organisations

in their geographical areas of operation. The EU was the only regional organisation that supported mediation and dialogue outside its regional sphere of action. Therefore, the EU performed a third-party role in 12 processes, including seven in Africa (Libya, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan) and all in Europe with the exception of Russia-Ukraine. It was not involved as a third party in Asia and the Pacific, the Americas or the Middle East. The African Union was a third party in 12 African processes (Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan), similarly to 2022 (11 processes). The IGAD participated in six processes (Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Sudan, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan and Somalia). The OSCE was active as a third party in two processes (Georgia and Moldova), though it had declined compared to previous years as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting divisions within the organisation. Other organisations such as the OAS, SADC, Arab League, CARICOM, ECOWAS, ASEAN, ECAAS, ICGLR, EAC, OIC, OIF and CELAC had a reduced role, participating as third parties in one or two processes each, but were involved together in 11 different processes: Senegal (Casamance), Colombia (EMC), Colombia (FARC), Mozambique, the DRC, Myanmar, the CAR, Libya, Syria, Haiti and Venezuela-Guyana, highlighting regional organisations' potential for supporting dialogue. New developments in 2023 included CARICOM's involvement in the Haitian crisis and CARICOM and CELAC's involvement in the crisis between Venezuela and Guyana.

Furthermore, together with intergovernmental organisations, a significant number of states became involved as third parties in negotiating processes, often amidst the projection of national interests in an international dispute for hegemony between powers. In line with the trend seen in previous years, in 2023 Middle Eastern countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Egypt played a significant role not only in the region itself, but also in other peace processes in Africa, which was the main stage of their diplomatic efforts beyond their immediate area of influence. In 2023, Qatar played a prominent role in contacts between Hamas and Israel that led to a partial one-week truce, exchanges of hostages and prisoners and the temporary lifting of obstacles to accessing humanitarian aid; Egypt, involved in Israel's truce with Islamic Jihad, in the meeting between Hamas and the PA to address intra-Palestinian reconciliation, in the attempts to achieve a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and in the new mechanism established by the Arab league to talk with the Syrian regime. Türkiye was active in several

The UN was involved in 60% of the processes that had at least one third party

Many states became involved as third parties in negotiations, often to project their national interests in an international scenario disputed between powers

negotiating processes in different regions, such as the intra-Palestinian dialogue, the Astana talks in Syria (a conflict in which it is a third party but also an actor and, in practice, a negotiating actor), the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan through the Caucasus 3+3 platform and the processes in Libya, Somalia and Somalia-Somaliland. Norwegian diplomats continued to play a central role in facilitating different processes such as the peace process between the government of Colombia and the ELN and between the Colombian government and EMC, and the talks between the government and the opposition in Venezuela, but they also participated in processes in other regions, such as the negotiations in Sudan and South Sudan and between Somalia and Somaliland. The United States remained involved as a third party with varying degrees of involvement in multiple scenarios, including eight processes in Africa and four in Europe.

Third parties –local, regional and international– got involved through various formats, including support structures. These had different forms and degrees of complexity. Among them, some included only States grouped in diverse structures. This was the case of the guarantor countries (Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, Mexico and Chile) and the supporting countries (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain) in the talks between the government of Colombia and the ELN, as well as the guarantor countries in the process between the Colombian government and EMC (Ireland, Norway, Switzerland and Venezuela) and the QUAD in the negotiations over the Sudanese national crisis (the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the UAE). Others included a combination of states and/or intergovernmental organisations and in some cases civil society actors. This was the case of the permanent supporters of the processes of Colombia (ELN) and Colombia (EMC), which brought together representatives of the UN and the Catholic Church, as well as the OAS in the process with EMC. Other cases included the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR (AU and ECCAS, with support from the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and Chad) and the Third Party Monitoring Team support structure in the process in the Philippines (MILF). In some cases, intergovernmental organisations were coordinated through specific structures, such as the Quartet in Libya, formed by the UN, Arab League, AU and EU; the Trilateral Mechanism in Sudan, involving UNITAMS, the AU and the IGAD; and the Group of International Support in the CAR, made up of the UN and the EU. In other cases, the coordination occurred on a practical level, without specific platforms, as in Venezuela, where in addition to Norway as the main facilitator of the dialogue, Russia and the Netherlands were also involved. In 2023, the dynamics of international

Table 1.4. Intergovernmental organisations as third parties in peace processes in 2023

UNITED NATIONS (UN) (24)	
AFRICA	
Chad	Observation of the peace process facilitated by Qatar
CAR	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Central African Republic. The UN is part of the International Support Group for Central Africa (GIS-RCA)
DRC	UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in the DRC
Libya	UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Libya United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) The UN forms part of the Quartet for the Libyan Political Agreement along with the AU, Arab League and EU
Mali	UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Mali United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
Morocco – Western Sahara	UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Western Sahara United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)
Mozambique	UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Mozambique
Somalia	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
South Sudan	United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for South Sudan
Sudan	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)
Sudan – South Sudan	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
AMERICA	
Colombia (ELN)	UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Colombia
Colombia (EMC)	UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Colombia
Colombia (FARC)	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
Venezuela – Guyana	UN Secretary-General
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Peacebuilding Fund Resident Coordinator Office Mediation Support Unit UNDP
EUROPE	
Cyprus	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus Mission of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Cyprus (OSASG)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	United Nations Special Representative in the Geneva International Discussions
Russia – Ukraine	Two UN task forces led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), involved in the negotiations on the Black Sea Initiative and the Memorandum of Understanding
Serbia – Kosovo	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Kosovo and head of the UNMIK mission
MIDDLE EAST	
Iran	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) The UN Secretary-General regularly reports on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which validated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015)
Israel – Palestine	UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
Syria	UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria
Yemen	UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen United Nations Mission to Support the Hedaydah Agreement (UNMHA)
AFRICAN UNION (AU) (12)	
AFRICA	
CAR	The AU leads the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR (the AU with the support of ECCAS, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and Chad)
Chad	Observation of the peace process facilitated by Qatar
DRC	The AU leads the Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue in the DRC
Ethiopia (Tigray)	AU mediation team led by the AU Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (AU-MVCM)

Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	The AU has made facilitation efforts between the three countries
Libya	The AU forms part of the Quartet for the Libyan Political Agreement along with the EU, Arab League and UN
Mali	AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel The AU participates in the Mediation Team, which supports the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali
Mozambique	The AU is the guarantor of the peace agreement
Somalia	AU High Representative for Somalia African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)
South Sudan	The AU is part of “IGAD Plus”
Sudan	AU High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP) The AU and its Peace and Security Council (PSC) are part of the mediating group
Sudan – South Sudan	African Union Border Programme (AUBP)
EUROPEAN UNION (EU) (12)	
AFRICA	
CAR	The EU is a member of the International Support Group for Central Africa (GIS-RCA)
DRC	The EU delegation in the DRC The EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	The EU has given support to AU facilitation efforts
Libya	The EU forms part of the Quartet for the Libyan Political Agreement along with the AU, Arab League and UN
Mali	The EU Special Representative for the Sahel
Mozambique	The EU Special Envoy for the Peace Process in Mozambique
South Sudan	The EU is part of the mediation group
EUROPE	
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	President of the European Council EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA)
Cyprus	High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the European Commission
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia EU Observation Mission in Georgia (EUMM)
Moldova (Transdnistria)	EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, in Moldova (Transdnistria) (EUBAM) The EU has an observer role in the 5+2 format of the peace process
Serbia – Kosovo	President of the European Council High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the European Commission European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues EU Rule-of-Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo)
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD) (6)	
Ethiopia (Oromia)	The IGAD has facilitated the peace talks
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Participation in the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (AU-MVCM)
Somalia	IGAD delegation
South Sudan	The IGAD, which includes Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda, forms part of “IGAD Plus” in South Sudan
Sudan	The IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)
Sudan – South Sudan	IGAD delegation
ARAB LEAGUE (2)	
AFRICA	
Libya	The Arab League forms part of the Quartet for the Libyan Political Agreement along with the AU, EU and UN
MIDDLE EAST	
Syria	Ministerial liaison committee (interlocution mechanism) with the Syrian government to address the crisis in the country and related challenges in the region
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) (2)	
Haiti	CARICOM Eminent Persons Group
Venezuela – Guyana	CARICOM presidency (government of Dominica)
ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE) (2)	
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Special Representative of the Rotating Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE for the South Caucasus
Moldova (Transdnistria)	Special Representative of the Rotating Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE for the Transdnistrian Settlement Process OSCE Mission in Moldova

ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) (2)	
Colombia (EMC)	Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS)
Colombia (FARC)	Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS)
SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) (2)	
DRC	SADC representation in the DRC
Mozambique	SADC is the guarantor of the peace agreement
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) (1)	
Myanmar	ASEAN envoy
COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES (CELAC) (1)	
Venezuela – Guyana	Presidency pro-tempore of CELAC (government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC) (1)	
DRC	Facilitation of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (Nairobi process)
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICAN STATES (ECCAS) (1)	
CAR	ECCAS delegation in the CAR
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) (1)	
Senegal (Casamance)	Facilitator and guarantor
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR) (1)	
DRC	Facilitation of negotiations between DRC and Rwanda (Luanda process)
ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE (OIF) (1)	
DRC	OIF delegation in the DRC
ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC) (1)	
CAR	OIC delegation in the CAR

division and confrontation between powers continued to have a negative impact on joint structures supporting dialogue. Thus, in 2023, for yet another year, platforms such as the OSCE Minsk Group and the Middle East Peace Quartet remained inactive in supporting peace negotiations between Armenia-Azerbaijan and Israel-Palestine, respectively. In Moldova, the 5+2 platform (which involved the parties in conflict, the OSCE as mediator, Ukraine and Russia as mediators-guarantors and the US and the EU as observers) remained inactive as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine, though its members attended 1+1 format meetings facilitated by the OSCE.

With regard to the **negotiating agendas**, one must consider the particular aspects of each case and bear in mind that the details of the issues under discussion did not always become known to the public. Once again, **the search for truces, ceasefires and cessations of hostilities** was one of the central subjects of discussion in various peace processes. It was a crucial issue in the Palestinian-Israeli context in the first half of the year, then after the significant escalation of violence starting in October, which activated several different diplomatic initiatives as the weeks passed and alarms about the serious humanitarian crisis and the commission of genocide in Gaza. A ceasefire was also important in the discussions about the future of Yemen, where a de facto cessation of hostilities was maintained during 2023, despite the breakdown of the UN-backed truce agreement. The ceasefire agreements were central to the negotiating

In 2023, the dynamics of international division and confrontation among powers continued to have a negative impact on joint structures supporting dialogue

processes with both the ELN and EMC. These agreements then led to the establishment of mechanisms to verify compliance. The ceasefire agreements were central to the negotiating processes with both the ELN and EMC. These agreements then led to dialogues for the establishment of mechanisms to verify compliance. In

Africa there were cessations of hostilities and ceasefire agreements in different contexts, like in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia and Tigray, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan or the DRC, in relation to the armed groups in the east of the country and especially M23. In contrast to 2022, in the second year of Russia's invasion, the governments of Russia and Ukraine did not resume negotiations regarding a possible ceasefire and remained at loggerheads.

Other important issues were related to **autonomy, self-determination, independence, administrative-territorial set-up and recognition of the identity** of different minorities. This was true of the processes in Cameroon, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, India (Assam and Nagaland), the Philippines (MILF and MNLF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville), Thailand (south), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Moldova (Transdnestrria), Serbia-Kosovo and others. Most of the negotiations around these issues faced significant obstacles, given many governments' refusal to accept formulas for decentralisation and the recognition of sovereignty. Some negotiations addressed issues related to border demarcation, state sovereignty and mutual

recognition. The outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan made it difficult to make progress in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, especially in resolving the dispute over the Abyei region. Armenia and Azerbaijan continued to encounter obstacles in their negotiations regarding border delimitation and mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The talks between Venezuela and Guyana were focused on establishing confidence-building, communicating and easing tension to address the territorial dispute between both countries after Venezuela held a referendum on annexing the Essequibo region, which is under the sovereignty and administration of Guyana and claimed by Venezuela.

Issues related to the **governance** of countries and political transitions, the distribution of power and elections were also addressed. In Africa, governance issues were present in ongoing negotiations in various contexts, including Chad, Mali, the CAR, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. In the Americas, the negotiating agendas in Haiti and Venezuela were notably linked to elections, considered key for moving ahead in their respective transitions.

As in previous years, other topics in the negotiations included **security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants**. These were widely present in negotiating processes in Africa, such as in Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. In Sudan, disagreements between the military parties over reforming the security sector, especially regarding the deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national army and establishing the command structure, spiked tensions and led to fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF paramilitary group. In contrast, in Mozambique, the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 agreement was completed. In Asia and the Pacific, there was related progress in the Philippines (MILF). In the Philippines, the MILF and the government oversaw the third phase of the disarmament and demobilisation of former MILF combatants, which began in 2015 and has so far included 26,145 of the 40,000 former combatants included in the 2014 peace agreement. Other negotiating issues during the year included prisoner exchanges, such as in Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine and Yemen, and other humanitarian challenges, including access to humanitarian aid, as well as procedural issues, especially in Asian negotiating processes.

There were setbacks in 2023 in Mali, Sudan, South Korea-North Korea, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the crisis in Gaza

In Africa, the processes in Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises

Regarding the **evolution of peace processes and negotiating processes**, it is generally possible to identify a wide variety of trends: a good development of contacts that leads to the achievement of far-reaching agreements; establishment of negotiations where there were none or reactivation of dialogue after years of paralysis; intense efforts of an exploratory nature that arouse expectations; negotiating rounds that take place without making progress on key points, but that keep a channel of dialogue open; situations of deep blockade and lack of contact despite the efforts of third parties to facilitate a negotiation; obstacles and difficulties already in the phase of implementation of agreements; and contexts in which violence and violations of ceasefire agreements and hostilities have a profound impact on the prospects for peace processes. The analysis of the different cases in 2023 confirms this diversity of dynamics.

In 2023, most dialogue and negotiating processes suffered setbacks and serious difficulties. The setbacks were largely due to escalations in violence, especially in Mali and Sudan in Africa. In Mali the resumption of clashes in the north of the country between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk. In Sudan the start of a new armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country. Furthermore, hopeful initiatives conceived during months of discreet effort for the cases of Cameroon and Somalia-Somaliland failed a few days after their announcement. Constitutional referendums were held in Chad and the CAR as part of the implementation of previous agreements, but they were controversial and represented significant setbacks in democratic governance. In Asia and the Pacific relations between South Korea and North Korea deteriorated significantly during the year, to the point that both countries suspended the 2018 agreement in which both countries had committed to improving their bilateral relations and actively negotiating in favour of reunification. In Europe there was a great setback when Azerbaijan's military offensive eliminated the option of a negotiated solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, forced the exodus of the Armenian population from the enclave and added a new regional and global benchmark for the use of force to settle disputes. In the Middle East, various initiatives to resolve the crisis in Gaza, which witnessed an unprecedented level of violence, failed to achieve

a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year and the situation continued to deteriorate in December.

Many negotiating processes also faced serious problems and in some cases ran aground in 2023. In Africa, the processes in Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises. Five years after a historic peace agreement was signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia, alarms were raised due to troop movements on their shared border and there was no contact between the parties alongside reports of possible Eritrean support for the Amhara Fano militias, which were fighting against the Ethiopian security forces after having been their allies months before. Talks began between the Ethiopian government and the armed group OLA to settle the high-intensity conflict in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, but no specific agreements were reached. Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan also agreed to resume talks on the dispute over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), but no progress was made in the various rounds. In Libya, there continued to be no agreement to hold elections, initially scheduled for 2021, and obstacles to the negotiating process persisted overall. In the DRC, regional initiatives for a negotiated solution failed due to the escalation of the M23's offensive and tensions between the DRC and Rwanda. In South Sudan, despite some progress made at the beginning of the year, new tensions arose later between the parties that had signed the 2018 agreement, threatening the unity of the transitional government. Similarly, no significant progress was reported in the peace talks in Rome that the South Sudanese government is holding with the armed groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement, though the negotiations were resumed after having been called off in late 2022. In Asia and the Pacific, there were major disagreements between Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, while the negotiating process in India (Nagaland) reached a standstill and no headway was made between the US and North Korea.

In the Americas, the negotiating process in Haiti hit significant snags, despite some progress in attempting to reach some mutual understanding, such as the appointment of the CARICOM Eminent Persons Group. Europe continued to deal with entrenched and aggravated difficulties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, highlighted in the negotiating processes in Georgia and Moldova. Even though an agreement was reached at the beginning of the year to advance the normalisation of

relations between Serbia and Kosovo, the process faced underlying difficulties amidst the deteriorating situation in northern Kosovo. In the Middle East, the negotiating process in Syria continued with no prospects for a political solution to the armed conflict, which reported an escalation in violence at the end of the year. Furthermore, the situation in Gaza had regional repercussions, spreading uncertainty and greater difficulties in other contexts. Thus, by the year's end, the relatively positive prospects in the Yemeni negotiating process were in question due to the regional impact of the crisis in Gaza and the escalation in the Red Sea. The situation in Gaza also affected the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, which raised very few expectations before the events of October, and negatively influenced the context of negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme. Overall, it was not possible to reactivate high-level negotiations in the scenarios in Morocco-Western Sahara, Russia-Ukraine and Cyprus during the year.

In this landscape of obstacles, the rise in polarisation, division and geopolitical confrontation worldwide hampered peacebuilding efforts and increased military approaches to the crises. Conflicts with a great capacity for spillover that were also caught in dynamics of geopolitical confrontation, such as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, as well as the responses to them, revealed challenges such as growing global militarism, double standards, international divisions in responses, the increasing use of force to settle disputes and the weakening of the multilateral system.

Despite the setbacks and problems experienced in many negotiating processes, others enjoyed rapprochement and progress. In Africa, this was true of the cases of Mozambique, where the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed; Senegal (Casamance), where a peace agreement was signed between the government and one of the MFDC factions that provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, development projects in the region and action to allow the refugee population to return; and Ethiopia (Tigray), due to the progress in implementing the 2022 peace agreement between the federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region, which in 2023 included the almost complete withdrawal of all armed groups and Eritrean forces and beginning of the effective disarmament of Tigrayan combatants. However, this progress in Ethiopia (Tigray) was accompanied by fragility and violence against civilians and was also

The rise in polarisation, division and geopolitical confrontation worldwide hampered peacebuilding efforts and increased military approaches to the crises

Despite the setbacks and problems in many negotiating processes, others enjoyed rapprochement and progress, such as in Mozambique, Senegal (Casamance), Ethiopia (Tigray), the Philippines (NDF, MILF, MNLF), Thailand (south) and India (Assam)

Table 1.5. Main agreements of 2023

Peace processes	Agreements
Colombia (ELN)	In June, the government of Colombia and the ELN reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement by which they committed to putting an end to offensive actions. The agreement was initially valid for 180 days and was planned to begin on 3 August 2023. The agreement also provided for the formation of a Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.
Colombia (EMC)	In October, the government of Colombia and EMC reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement that allowed peace negotiations to officially begin. The ceasefire was initially agreed to be valid from 16 October 2023 to 16 January 2024 and the protocols of the Oversight, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism were also agreed.
Philippines (NDF)	After six years of impasse in the negotiating process, in late November the government of the Philippines and the NDF signed the Oslo Joint Communiqué by which they committed to resolving the armed conflict peacefully and to establishing a negotiating framework that would lead to a peace agreement.
Israel – Palestine	After Qatar’s mediation, supported by Egypt and the USA, the Israeli government and Hamas reached an agreement to temporarily suspend hostilities that remained in force between 24 and 30 November 2023. The initial agreement was planned to last for four days, during which the release of 50 hostages captured by Hamas was scheduled to occur in exchange for the release of 150 Palestinian prisoners. The mechanism, which was designed to encourage an extension of the agreement beyond this initial period, also provided access to humanitarian aid and fuel in the Gaza Strip. The agreement was extended, first for 48 hours, then for another 24, and led to the release of over 100 people held by Hamas (86 Israelis and 24 foreigners) and the release of nearly 240 Palestinian women and children, many of them detained by Israel under the controversial label of “administrative detention”. The exchange was assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross.
Senegal (Casamance)	In May, a peace agreement was signed with a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance MFDC faction, called the Diakaye faction. The signing ceremony was attended by the envoy of President Macky Sall; the mayors of Zinguichor, Bindiona and Douloulou, the commander of the Diakaye faction, Fatoma Coly; and members of the international community. For the past three years, civil society organisations based in Ziguinchor devoted to peacebuilding in the Senegambia region under the Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC) have been mediating between the parties. The agreement provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the delivery of birth certificates to people who did not have access to them due to the instability and measures to ensure the peaceful return of all refugees.
Serbia – Kosovo	The president of Serbia and the prime minister of Kosovo gave verbal support to the Agreement on the Path towards the Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia on 27 February, as well as its implementation annex (Ohrid Agreement) of 18 March, both proposed by the EU and supported by Kosovo and Serbia as part of the dialogue process facilitated by the EU. The February agreement, with 11 articles, included issues such as the parties’ commitment to mutual recognition of their respective national documents and symbols, without requiring Serbia to formally recognise Kosovo as a state; Serbia’s non-objection to Kosovo’s entry into international organisations; both parties’ pledge to establish ways to ensure an “appropriate level” of self-government for the Kosovo Serb community; an obligation to implement previous agreements; and the continuation of EU-facilitated talks to reach a legally binding agreement for the comprehensive normalisation of relations. The March annex included content and procedural aspects. Despite the verbal support for the agreement and the annex, difficulties arose very quickly, hand in hand with disagreements on substantive issues.
Sudan	The warring parties (SAF and RSF) agreed to and signed the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan on 11 May. It was the result of the “pre-negotiation talks” promoted and mediated by the US and Saudi Arabia in the city of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on 6 May. However, despite the achievement of this declaration, the parties to the conflict continued to commit violence against the civilian population.
Sudan – South Sudan	At the intercommunity level, agreements were reached between communities in the Abyei region during the year. First, the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities agreed to an end to hostilities, a ceasefire, the deployment of security forces in the disputed areas to create a buffer zone and freedom of movement between the areas affected by tensions in the southern part of the Abyei area and the northern part of Warrap State (South Sudan). Second, the Dinka Ngok and Miseriya communities signed an agreement that included a cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, the need to reactivate the joint community peace committee and the continuation of the peace talks. The agreement was reached as part of a peace conference between the parties between 20 and 23 March in Todach (Abyei area).
Venezuela – Guyana	In mid-December, shortly after the escalation of the diplomatic crisis that was caused by the Venezuelan referendum on the disputed territory of Essequibo, the presidents of both countries met in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and signed the Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace, by which they committed not to threaten each other or use force against each other, to refrain from escalating the conflict and to cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground (and, if they occur, to immediately communicate with each other, and also with CARICOM, CELAC and the president of Brazil). President Maduro and President Ali also committed to establishing a joint commission of foreign ministers to address mutually agreed upon issues, to continue the dialogue on the dispute and to meet again in Brazil in the next three months. Finally, it was agreed that any dispute between the two countries would be resolved in accordance with international law, including the 1966 Geneva Agreement. At the same time, however, Guyana clearly expressed its commitment to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice to resolve the border controversy.

overshadowed by the serious escalation of violence in the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara. Major progress was achieved in various negotiating processes in Asia and the Pacific. For example, the Philippine government and the NDF signed a joint communiqué in which they pledged to try to resolve their armed conflict through dialogue after a six-year hiatus in the negotiations. Other developments in the Philippines involved the completion of the third phase of the

demobilisation of former MILF combatants, as well as the resumption of talks with the two main factions of the MNLF regarding the full implementation of the 1996 peace agreement. The negotiating processes in Thailand (south) and India (Assam) also benefited from important progress. The processes in Colombia (ELN and EMC) and Venezuela ranged between progress with the achievement of important agreements and moments of crisis and serious problems.

Finally, regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, the analysis of the different peace processes in 2023 confirms, like in previous years, the obstacles that women face in participating in formal processes and the difficulties in incorporating a gender perspective in negotiation. The peace processes continued to be characterised mainly by low levels of **women's participation in the negotiating and mediating teams** and by a lack of integration of the gender perspective in designing the processes. For the most part, no specific mechanisms of participation were designed for women in most negotiations and gender issues and recognition of the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population were left out of much of the negotiating agendas. There were setbacks in some negotiating processes during the year. The peace process in Mali, one of the few that had women participating in the monitoring mechanisms of the peace agreement (in this case the 2015 Algiers peace agreement), was endangered by the resumption of fighting in the northern part of the country between the parties that had signed it. Even though the peace agreement in South Sudan included a 35% quota for women in all executive and transitional institutions and processes, the requirement was not met in most cases, in most of the commissions created to implement the agreement or in the current government or Parliament. In the bodies created in 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was only respected in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the National Constitutional Review Commission (32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%).

Even so, there were several processes in which women could participate, though with many limitations. In Africa, in the process of Somalia-Somaliland, the former minister of Somaliland, Edna Adan Ismail, was appointed Somaliland's envoy for the talks. In the CAR, the proportion of women in local peace and reconciliation committees has increased since the 2019 agreement was signed and stood at 35% in 2023, according to the UN. In the Philippines, in the peace process between the Philippine government and the NDF, the group's negotiating panel was headed by a woman (Juliet de Lima) and the Norwegian government's facilitation work was led by Kristina Lie Revheim. Several women played significant roles in different peace processes in the Americas. In the negotiations between the government of Colombia and the ELN, a woman was appointed the chief negotiator of a delegation for the first time when Vera Grabe became the head of the government's team. Both parties' negotiating delegations were practically equal (seven women out of 15 in the government's delegation and three out of eight in the ELN's delegation). LGBTIQ+

There were setbacks in the gender dimension of the peace processes in Mali and South Sudan in 2023

Women's civil society organisations from Sudan, Serbia-Kosovo, Cyprus, Yemen and elsewhere demanded dialogue and inclusion in the negotiating processes

organisations were involved in efforts to channel the participation of civil society alongside the negotiating process with the ELN. Women also participated in the delegations of the government of Colombia and EMC. The Special Women's Instance for the Implementation of the Gender-Based Approach, which was defined by the 2016 peace agreement between Colombia and the FARC, continued to be active in implementing it. Senator Mirlande Manigat was appointed president of the High Transition Council of Haiti, tasked with promoting national dialogue and advising the prime minister in promoting and managing the transition in the country. In Europe, only the negotiating process in Cyprus had a gender-specific mechanism in the formal negotiating process, the gender equality technical committee. However, some analyses during the year highlighted

the lack of implementation of the action plan adopted by the equality committee in 2022 in Cyprus. In Georgia, government representatives participating in the negotiating process continued to hold meetings with civil society representatives, including women's organisations, though female civil society activists had identified gender limitations in the negotiating process in previous years. The Women's Advisory Board on Sustainable Peacebuilding (WAB) was active in Moldova. Established in late 2022 by UN Women, this informal body is composed of 14 experts and civil society representatives, including seven from the right bank of the Nistru/Dniestr River and seven from the left. However, there were no meetings between the OSCE, the mediating actor in the negotiating process, and the WAB in 2023, according to the OSCE. In the Middle East, women's participation in Syria continued to be affected by the deadlock in the negotiations, particularly the UN-backed Geneva process, where they had achieved 30% participation in the Constitutional Committee.

Regarding the **inclusion of a gender approach, specific clauses on gender equality and recognition of women's rights in peace agreements**, some references were made to the women, peace and security agenda in the ceasefire agreement between the Colombian government and EMC. References were also made to the inclusion of diversity in the agreement with EMC. New national action plans on women, peace and security were approved during the year, such as in the Philippines (2023-2033) and in South Sudan and Moldova (in the latter two cases, these are second-generation action plans, for the period 2023-2027). Moreover, South Sudan ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol).

Civil society women's organisations were highly active in various peace processes and demanded continuity in

the negotiations, greater participation or the inclusion of proposals regarding more recognition of women's rights or general suggestions regarding the content of the negotiations. For example, since the outbreak of armed clashes between the SAF and the RSF in Sudan, different initiatives led by women emerged that called for a ceasefire, highlighted humanitarian needs and condemned sexual violence related to the conflict. They also demanded the participation of women in the ceasefire negotiations and any future political process and denounced the failure to include women in these spaces. Furthermore, Sudanese women's rights groups participated together with other civil society organisations in issuing the Declaration of Principles of

Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan in July 2023, which brought together 75 organisations. In Europe, women's organisations and activists from Serbia, Kosovo, Cyprus and elsewhere engaged in confidence-building initiatives, called for dialogue and demanded more female participation in the respective negotiating processes. Yemeni women continued to complain of their exclusion from these areas and demanded to participate in discussions about the future of their country as a right, as they continued to be involved in mediating local disputes, reintegrating child soldiers, opening humanitarian corridors and documenting abuses, while taking the gender perspective into account.

2. Peace negotiations in Africa

- Throughout 2023, there were 18 peace processes and negotiations identified in Africa, which accounts for practically 40% of the 45 peace processes worldwide.
- The resumption of clashes in northern Mali between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk.
- In Mozambique, the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed.
- Progress was made in the implementation of the 2022 peace agreement between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, although atrocities continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and the Fano militias against the civilian population.
- Amidst the violence in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, peace talks began between Ethiopia and the armed group OLA in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya.
- Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan resumed the talks on the dispute over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), but no progress was made in the different negotiating rounds.
- The agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland over the possible future official recognition of Somaliland threatened to destabilise the Horn of Africa and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland.
- The escalation of the offensive by the Congolese armed group M23 in October, supported by Rwanda, caused a spike in tension between the DRC and Rwanda, while regional initiatives for a negotiated solution failed.
- The start of a new armed conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country.

This chapter analyses the peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023. First it examines the general characteristics and trends of peace processes in the region, then it delves into the evolution of each of the cases throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. At the beginning of the chapter, a map is included that identifies the African countries that were the scene of negotiations during 2023.

Table 2.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023

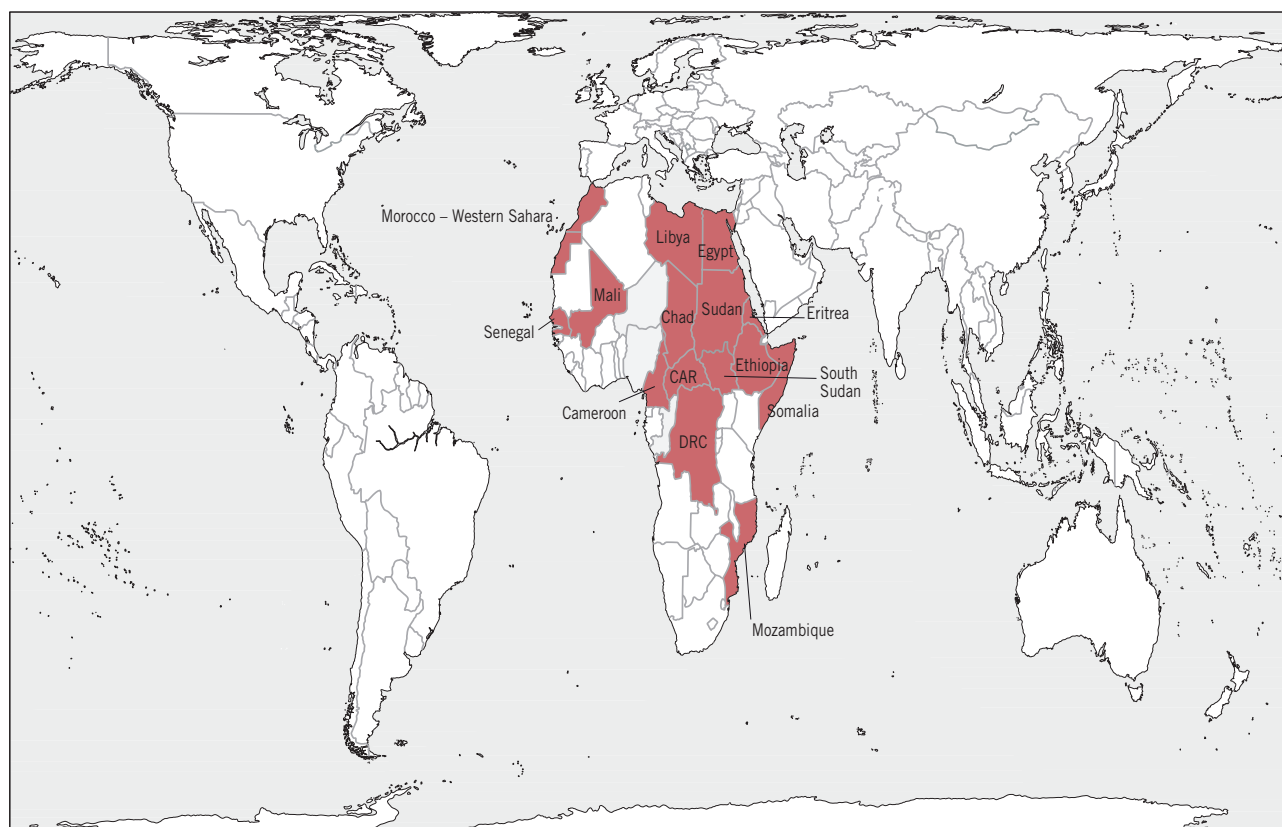
Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	Government of Cameroon; four interim governments (IGs) proclaiming themselves representative of the people of Ambazonia: IG Sisiku (Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, first President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and Vice President Dabney Yerima); the other three IGs are derived from IG Sisiku, each created after the previous IG refused to give up power: IG Sako (Samuel Sako); IG Marianta (Iya Marianta Njomia); IG Chris Anu (ally of Leke Olivier Fongunueh's Red Dragons armed group). The Ambazonia Governing Council coalition (AGovC, led by Cho Ayaba, armed wing Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF). Other political, military and social movements, and religious groups: Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), which includes APLM/SOCADEF, FSCW, MoRISC, SCARM, SCAPO, SCNC (North America faction) and RoAN. Southern Cameroons Stakeholder Platform (SCSP), which includes political movements, civil society, armed groups, religious groups: IG Sisiku, SCNC (except the North America faction), Consortium, Global Takumbeng, SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, SCCOP, AIPC, AYC, SCYC, SCCAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, Reach Out, prisoners organisations, displaced population and refugee organisations, traditional leaders and others.	Church, civil society organisations, USIP, Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN), Vatican, Canada, USA
CAR	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Séléka coalition, anti-balaka militias	The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation (AU and ECCAS, with the support of the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Rep. of the Congo and Chad), Community of Sant'Egidio, ACCORD, OIC, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, China, Russia, Sudan

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Chad	Doha process: Transitional Military Council, 52 armed groups, including the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCSMR), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) DNIS: Transitional Military Council, civil society organisations, 34 of the 52 armed groups that signed the Doha process The 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement formed the Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), including the FACT and the CCSMR	Qatar; AU and UN, among others; Community of Sant'Egidio, ECCAS
DRC	Government of the DRC, government of Rwanda, armed group M23, armed groups from the eastern part of the country, political opposition and civil society	AU, SADC, ICGLR, EAC, EU, UN, OIF, USA, Angola, Qatar
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Eritrea and Ethiopia	United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, USA
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Federal government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)	IGAD, Kenya, Norway and Tanzania
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Federal Government, political and military authorities of the Ethiopian region of Tigray (Tigray People's Liberation Front)	AU, USA, IGAD
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan	AU, World Bank (WB), UAE, EU and USA
Libya	Government of National Unity (GNU), Government of National Stability (GNS), Presidential Council, High State Council (HSC), House of Representatives (HoR), LNA/ALAF	UN; Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Türkiye, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia (Berlin Process)
Mali	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) that brings together Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) –MNL, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, civil society organisations, Mauritania, Carter Center (Independent Observer of the Peace Agreement)
Morocco – Western Sahara	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)	UN, Algeria and Mauritania, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Mozambique	Government, RENAMO, RENAMO military junta	AU, National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant'Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Senegal (Casamance)	Government, factions of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)	ECOWAS, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSAPAC)
Somalia	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, South-west), political military movement Ahlu Sunna WaJama'a, clan and sub-clan leaders, Somaliland	UN, IGAD, Türkiye, AU
Somalia – Somaliland	Federal Government of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland	Türkiye, Norway
South Sudan	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): Government (SPLM), SPLM/A-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others), two independent factions of the SPLM-IO: the Kitwang faction led by Simon Gatwech Dual and the faction headed by General Johnson Olony. Peace talks in Rome: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously SSOMA): National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the Real SPLM, South Sudan People's Patriotic Movement (SSPPM).	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): IGAD Plus (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda), AU (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), China, Russia, Egypt, Troika (USA, United Kingdom and Norway), EU, UN, South Sudan Council of Churches, Rome negotiations: Community of Sant'Egidio
Sudan¹	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government of Sudan, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur), Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu factions National crisis peace negotiations: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, IGAD, UNITAMS National crisis peace negotiations: Trilateral mechanism (UNITAMS, AU and IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)); Quad (USA, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Egypt
Sudan – South Sudan	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan, Ethnic communities of the Abyei region	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU, UNISFA, UN

*Those in bold are analysed in the chapter.

1 In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Map 2.1. Peace negotiations in Africa in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023

2.1 Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

Throughout 2023, there were **18 peace processes and negotiations in Africa**, accounting for 40% of the 45 peace processes identified worldwide. These are more than in previous years (15 peace processes and negotiations in 2022, 12 peace processes in 2021 and 13 in 2020), though fewer than those reported in 2019 (19) and 2018 (22). Nine negotiations were located in the Horn of Africa (Sudan, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Somalia and Somalia-Somaliland), three in Central Africa (Chad, the CAR and the DRC), another five in North Africa and West Africa (Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara and Senegal (Casamance)) and the remaining one in southern Africa (Mozambique). The increase in 2023 compared to 2022 is due to the addition of three new peace processes to the analysis during the year: the negotiating process initiated between the federal government of Ethiopia and representatives of the armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Tanzania; the resumption of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan to reach an agreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD); and the relaunch of international meetings and initiatives to promote a dialogue and negotiating process to achieve reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland.

Ten of these 18 peace negotiations were linked to armed conflicts: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Libya, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The remaining eight negotiating processes took place in contexts of socio-political crisis, which in some cases had also suffered episodes of war: Chad, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, Senegal (Casamance), Somalia-Somaliland and Sudan-South Sudan. Some of the peace processes corresponded to conflicts that began in the last decade –Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest, 2018), Libya (2011) and Mali (2012)–, while others date back to the previous decade, like the CAR (2006), Sudan (2003), South Sudan (2009) and Sudan-South Sudan. Still other conflicts and crisis situations date back to the 1990s, such as the cases of the DRC and Somalia, so the initiatives and peace negotiations linked to these conflicts have evolved profoundly since their origin in terms of the actors involved and the causes of the disputes. The last cycle of violence in Mozambique began in 2013, though it dates back to the limited application of the 1992 peace agreement that put an end to the conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO that began in 1974. The conflict in the Senegalese region of Casamance, which began in 1982, achieved its first peace agreement in 2004. Low-intensity clashes continued afterwards, led by factions that rejected the agreement.

The longest-running peace process studied in Africa, which suffers from structural paralysis, is the one between Morocco and Western Sahara, which began after the 1991 ceasefire agreement. Since the fall of Siad Barre in Somalia in 1991 and the self-proclamation of Somaliland as an independent republic that same year, though it was not recognised by the international community, different initiatives have failed to promote reconciliation between both administrations and to reintegrate Somaliland into Somalia.

In relation to the actors participating in the negotiations, in 2023 only **five cases exclusively involved the governments of the respective countries and armed groups or political and military movements in the negotiations**. They were the cases of Ethiopia, with the implementation of the agreement between the Ethiopian federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region, as well as between the Ethiopian federal government and the OLA armed group; Mozambique, between the government and the opposition group RENAMO; the CAR, between the government and the armed groups that did not abandon the peace process in December 2020; and Senegal, between the government and a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC). **Eight of the other 18 peace processes were characterised by a more complex scenario of actors, with governments, armed groups and political and social opposition actors**. This was confirmed in negotiating processes such as those in **Cameroon** (Ambazonia/North West and South West), where exploratory contacts in Canada involved different actors from the political and military secessionist spectrum; **Mali**, where the negotiating process has involved national authorities in recent years and many political and armed actors in the Azawad region (north); **Libya**, between political and military actors that control different areas of the country; **Somalia**, between the federal government, the leadership of the federal states and other political and military actors in the country; **Sudan**, between the government, the political opposition, the RSF paramilitary group and insurgent actors from various regions of the country; **South Sudan**, between the government, the armed group SPLM/A-IO and other smaller groups, both from the political opposition and armed opposition; and the **DRC**, where the negotiations involved the Congolese government and the Rwandan government, as well as the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country. **Other negotiating processes were carried out by the governments of neighbouring countries or regional organisations as part of interstate disputes**. Examples of included the negotiating process between **Sudan and South Sudan**, the stalled process between **Eritrea and Ethiopia**

All the peace processes and negotiations studied had third-party support, whether taking the form of international organisations, regional organisations, states and religious organisations specialised in mediation and facilitation

and the talks between **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan** on managing the waters of the Nile River. The Morocco-Western Sahara negotiating process, which has been at a standstill in recent years, involves the Moroccan government and the POLISARIO Front, which proclaimed the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976. It is considered an international dispute because it is a territory considered pending decolonisation by the UN.

All the peace processes and negotiations in Africa studied had third-party support, whether taking the form of international organisations, regional organisations, states and religious organisations or organisations specialised in mediation and facilitation.

Although there are many cases where the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment are publicly known, in other contexts this work is carried out discreetly and away from the public eye. In all cases there was more than one actor doing mediation and facilitation work, with the UN playing the most prominent role, as it was involved in 11 of the 18 cases in Africa: the CAR, Chad, the DRC, Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan South Sudan, and Sudan-South Sudan. Another notable actor was the AU, which participated in 12 cases: the CAR, Chad, the DRC, Ethiopia (Tigray), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan. In Chad, both organisations played the role of observers, since the mediation was done by Qatar.

African regional intergovernmental organisations participated as third parties, like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali and in Senegal (Casamance); the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in the CAR and DRC negotiating processes; the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) in the CAR; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Mozambique; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Ethiopia (Oromia), Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan; and the East African Community (EAC) in the DRC. In addition to African intergovernmental organisations, other intergovernmental organisations participated as third parties in Africa, such as the EU (in Libya, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan and between Sudan and South Sudan).

States also continued to play a leading role as third parties in peace processes and negotiations in Africa. All the peace processes studied had states leading or supporting initiatives of dialogue and negotiation. Local and international religious actors also played roles as third parties, especially the Community of Sant'Egidio

(Vatican) in Cameroon, Mozambique, the CAR and South Sudan; the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the CAR; local religious institutions in Mozambique, the DRC and South Sudan; ecumenical formats such as the Anglophone General Conference (AGC), made up of Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders in Cameroon; and the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Organisations specialised in mediation and facilitation also played prominent roles, especially the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Cameroon, Libya, Mali, the CAR and Senegal; the Carter Center in Mali; and the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN) in Cameroon, among others.

As part of this proliferation of mediators, **the participation of third parties in joint formats continued to be frequent, as in previous years**, such as groups of friends and support groups. This was the case with the Swiss Contact Group and the Friends of the Swiss Contact Group (EU, USA, Canada, Belgium, Germany and the UK) in the conflict in Cameroon; the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia) in the negotiating process between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front; the international monitoring committee in Libya, in which the Libyan Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU and EU) participate, as well as a dozen countries; the International Support Group (which includes the UN and the EU) and the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, which was involved in the CAR and promoted by the AU and the CEEAC, with support from the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and Chad, and coexisted with other mediators in the CAR; the states of the Troika (the USA, United Kingdom and Norway); African Union High Level on Sudan (AUHIP) in the case of Sudan; other coordination formats included the IGAD Plus, which facilitates dialogue in South Sudan and which consists of the IGAD, the five members of the African Union High-Level Ad Hoc Committee (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria). In Sudan, the outbreak of a new armed conflict in April put an end to the progress achieved thanks to the existing double mediation process: the trilateral mechanism (made up of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the AU and the IGAD) and the one known as the Quad (which includes the US, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the UAE).

Regarding **the agendas** of the negotiations, there were **cessations of hostilities and ceasefire agreements** in different contexts, like in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia and Tigray, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan or the DRC, in relation to the armed groups in the east of the country and especially M23. **Security sector reform** was also a recurrent issue, especially the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants and the reform or creation of new security forces in peace agreements with various types and names, such as mixed units, joint forces or

unified national armies. These were found in most of the cases analysed, such as Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. Issues related to **governance** were also discussed in the ongoing negotiations in various contexts, such as in Chad, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. **Degrees of self-government and levels of administrative decentralisation, including independence** for some areas, were discussed in Cameroon, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, and Morocco-Western Sahara. Though it was particular, the negotiating process between Somalia and Somaliland would be part of this group. Finally, with regard to the **management of resources and territory**, unfinished border demarcations were another subject of negotiations in Africa, as in the disputes between Eritrea and Ethiopia and between Sudan and South Sudan, as was the dispute over the management of the waters of the Nile River between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan.

The gender, peace and security agenda in the negotiating processes in Africa continued to be characterised by the low level of women's participation in the negotiating teams in the ongoing processes, as well as by the absence of architectures to integrate the gender perspective. in these processes. However, the cases of Somalia and Somaliland, Mozambique and the CAR are worthy of mention. The former minister of Somaliland, Edna Adan Ismail, was appointed Somaliland's envoy for the talks between **Somalia and Somaliland**. In **Mozambique**, Peace Process Support – The Secretariat (PPS) had a staff of 50% women and 63% of them held senior positions. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, which culminated in 2023, attempted to integrate the gender perspective into its design and implementation. Demobilisation activities were carried out in accommodation centres designed to include gender-sensitive services, including separate accommodation and hygiene facilities for women. The UN highlighted the involvement of women in local peace and reconciliation committees in the **CAR**, which had increased since the 2019 political agreement had been signed and stood at 35% in October. The situation deteriorated in **Mali** and little progress was made in **South Sudan**. The peace process in **Mali**, one of the few that involved women in the mechanisms to monitor the 2015 Algiers peace agreement, was endangered by the resumption of fighting in the northern part of the country between the signatory parties. Although the peace agreement in **South Sudan** included a 35% quota for women in all executive and transitional institutions and processes, this provision was not met in most cases, in most of the commissions created to implement the agreement or in the current government or Parliament. In the bodies created during 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was only respected in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the National Constitutional Review Commission

(32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%). Positive news in South Sudan included the ratification of the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol) and the approval of the second national action plan on the women, peace and security agenda (2023-2027).

Remarkably, in most contexts many women's movements and organisations continued to demand active participation in peace processes and various local peacebuilding initiatives were led by civil society, especially by women's organisations. In this sense, we highlight the cases of **Cameroon, Somaliland and Sudan**. The tireless work that Cameroonian civil society women's organisations have carried out in recent years led the German Africa Foundation (DAS)² to give the German Africa Prize 2023 to the umbrella of 80 organisations of women mediators and activists that organised the 1st National Convention of Women for Peace in Cameroon in 2021,³ which brought together over 1,500 female civil society representatives working for peace in the country. In **Somaliland**, special envoy Edna Adan received the Templeton Prize in June 2023 for her work in peacebuilding and her fight against female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa out of the hospital that bears her name in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland. This prize highlighted the traditional role of Somali women's organisations in promoting peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives. Since the outbreak of armed clashes between the SAF and the RSF in **Sudan**, different initiatives led by women emerged that called for a ceasefire, highlighted humanitarian needs and condemned sexual violence related to the conflict. They also demanded the participation of women in the ceasefire negotiations and any future political process and denounced the failure to include women in these spaces. For example, on 13 July, 75 civil society organisations, including political forces, women's rights groups, youth networks, resistance committees, civil society groups and academics issued a Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan.

However, reality continued to be extremely serious. There were setbacks in terms of gender violence and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as evidenced by the serious situation of women in **Tigray (Ethiopia)**, the **CAR** (where Mohamed Ag Ayoya, the UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative in the country and humanitarian coordinator of MINUSCA, said that the serious crisis

gripping the country should be classified not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a "protection and gender crisis"), the **DRC** (where the departure of MONUSCO during 2024 could further aggravate the situation) and **Somalia** (where the executive director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, revealed a devastating situation). Nevertheless, regional organisations and UN Women continued to conduct many activities to promote women's empowerment and participation in peace-building initiatives in Africa, as in Sudan, in electoral processes, as in the DRC, and in activities linked to transitional justice, as in Ethiopia, with the aim of guaranteeing women's participation in developing an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy.

Despite the persistent absence of women in formal negotiating processes in Africa, their active participation in peacebuilding was evident in many contexts

Most peace negotiations in Africa followed a downward trend in 2023. No new peace agreement was signed between opposing parties during the year, except for the agreement reached in Senegal (Casamance) between the government and a faction of the MFDC and some intercommunity agreements, such as several in the region of Abyei, in the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan. On the contrary, advanced processes like those in Mali and Sudan suffered major setbacks due to the resumption of fighting.

Furthermore, hopeful initiatives conceived during months of discreet effort for the cases of Cameroon and Somalia-Somaliland failed a few days after their announcement. Chad and the CAR held controversial constitutional referendums as part of the implementation of previous agreements that undermined the democratic governance of both countries and rolled back the independence of the branches of power of the state by strengthening the presidential powers, according to various analysts. In **Cameroon**, secret contacts between representatives of the Cameroonian government and various English-speaking separatist groups between October and December 2022, facilitated by Canada as part of a new initiative to promote a peace process, were confirmed on 20 January 2023 with Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly's announcement that Canada had a mandate to facilitate peace talks between the conflicting parties in the country. However, three days after the announcement, the government of Cameroon denied that it had asked a "foreign party" to mediate a resolution to the conflict. In **Mali**, the parties that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, the government and Arab and Tuareg armed groups that had joined the Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP) coalition resumed fighting during the year, jeopardising the peace agreement. One of reasons that the war resumed between the signatory parties is related to

2 DAS press release, "German Africa Award 2023 goes to the Cameroonian women's peace platform '1st National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon'", DAS, 30 November 2023.

3 See Cameroon in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2021: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

the withdrawal of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the country (MINUSMA), which took effect between July and December, though tensions between the transitional authorities and armed movements had started to rise since the military junta came to power following the coup d'état in May 2021. In **Somalia**, the federal government continued with its policy of rapprochement with the member states of the federation. Several meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC), a body that brings together the federal government and the member states, were held during the year and some progress was made in sharing power within the federation. However, Puntland decided to suspend relations with Mogadishu and announced that it would operate as an autonomous administration until the interim Constitution was finalised. At the end of 2022, international contacts and initiatives were relaunched to promote dialogue between **Somalia and Somaliland**, which culminated in a meeting between both presidents in December 2023 in Djibouti. However, this historic meeting was overshadowed by Ethiopia and Somaliland's announcement on 1 January that they were signing a memorandum of understanding, which triggered a serious diplomatic crisis between Somaliland, Somalia and Ethiopia since it would include Ethiopia's possible recognition of Somaliland as an independent state, among other issues. In **Chad**, the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement in 2022, which left out 18 of the 52 armed groups, and the holding of the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS), also in 2022, which was described as a farce by opposition groups and civil society actors, helped to extend the mandate of the Transitional Military Council (CMT) for 24 months. A constitutional referendum was held on 17 December 2023, which the opposition boycotted, arguing that it strengthened presidential powers in the country and thereby helped to bolster coup plotter Mahamat Déby because it would allow him to run in future elections. The **CAR** continued with the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement with the armed groups that had not abandoned the negotiating framework. On 30 July, a constitutional referendum was held that was boycotted by the political and social opposition and various armed actors. Among other issues, the referendum eliminated presidential term limits, dissolved the Senate and withdrew parliamentary control over the signing of mining contracts, which henceforth would be in the president's hands. Though the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) noted that the conditions of the referendum had been satisfactory, other actors in the international community questioned the results. Finally, the negotiations promoted by the military junta of **Sudan** and part of the Sudanese political opposition

Most peace negotiations in Africa followed a downward trend in 2023

aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in Sudan during 2022, in which a framework agreement had been reached to create a transitional civilian government with elections in two years, fell apart after a new armed conflict broke out in the country on 15 April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF).⁴

The rest of the peace processes (Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan) did not yield any progress. On the contrary, they were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises.

Five years after the historic peace agreement was signed by **Eritrea and Ethiopia**, the war between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray between 2020 and 2022 helped the erstwhile enemies to ally to fight against the TPLF, but old grievances and new disputes could threaten to revive the conflict, according to various analysts. The fact that neither the Amhara militias nor the Eritrean militias participated in the South Africa agreement of November 2022 between Ethiopia and the TPLF, and that both had wanted to eliminate TPLF resistance instead of reaching an agreement, among other issues, increased tension between the two.⁵ The 2018 agreement led to the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, the resumption of flights and the reopening of their borders. The initial optimism waned after a few months when the border was closed again and many issues remained unresolved. During the year, troop movements on the shared border and the lack of meetings between the parties, in addition to possible Eritrean support for the Amhara Faro militias, which are fighting with Ethiopian security forces, raised alarms.⁶ In the **Ethiopian region of Oromia**, intense fighting went on between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and federal forces. However, peace talks began in Zanzibar (Tanzania) in April, facilitated by Kenya on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and by Norway, and although no concrete agreements were reached, both parties expressed their commitment to seeking a solution to the conflict. A second round of negotiations was held in Tanzania in late October, mediated by the IGAD. Anonymous diplomatic sources said they were optimistic about the progress of the negotiating process. During the year, **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan** agreed to resume talks to reach an agreement on the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), though no progress was made in the different rounds of negotiations held.

4 The negotiations to achieve a transitional government were promoted through an intra-Sudanese peace initiative known as the trilateral mechanism, sponsored by UNITAMS, the AU and the IGAD, as well as through informal conversations between the military junta and the Central Council of Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC-CC), in what was known as the Quad mediation bloc, which included the US, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as third parties.

5 Khair Omer, Mohammed, "How Eritrea Could Derail the Ethiopian Peace Deal", *Foreign Policy*, 10 November 2022.

6 Khair Omer, Mohammed, "Are Ethiopia and Eritrea on the Path to War?", *Foreign Policy*, 7 November 2023.

Negotiations involving different local and international actors continued in **Libya**, but no definitive political agreement was reached for holding elections in the country, which were initially scheduled for December 2021, and the political process was beset by difficulties until the end of the year. The peace negotiations in the **DRC** remained at a standstill while the M23 escalated violence and pressure rose on Rwanda to cease its support for the armed group and its direct participation in attacks on Congolese soil. There was not even any progress made in the Luanda process, the talks between the DRC and Rwanda regarding its support for the M23, which had paved the way for the 2022 Luanda agreement and a ceasefire by the M23, which was not respected, nor in the Nairobi process, consisting of inter-Congolese dialogue initiatives between the government, civil society and armed groups, including the M23. On the contrary, the threat of an escalation of violence pitting the DRC against Rwanda became more tangible. Meanwhile, the negotiating process between **Sudan and South Sudan** was affected by the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan, which made it difficult to make progress in the negotiations between both countries, especially with regard to the dispute over the Abyei region, though some headway was made in resolving intercommunity disputes. In **South Sudan**, some progress was made in implementing the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) during the year and the presidential election was confirmed for December 2024. The original three-year transition period set out in the R-ARCSS ended on 22 February and the extended 24-month transition period began, which will end on 22 February 2025, as agreed by the parties according to the road map. Early in the year, the Transitional Government reported new progress linked to the implementation of the R-ARCSS, although in the second and third quarters of the year, there was new tension between the parties that had signed the R-ARCSS that threatened the unity of the Transitional Government and splinter groups broke off from the SPLA-IO, weakening it. Moreover, coinciding with Pope Francis' visit to South Sudan, President Kiir lifted the suspension of the Rome peace talks with the groups that had not signed the R-ARCSS. The talks will move to Kenya in 2024. Finally, the search for a political solution to the conflict in **Western Sahara** continued to revolve mainly around the diplomatic activity of the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy, Staffan de Mistura, appointed in late 2021, although his efforts did not manage to restart the negotiations during the year. De Mistura attempted to encourage the resumption of dialogue amidst continuing low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front after the breakdown of the 1991 ceasefire, though with lower levels of violence compared to 2022, and regional tension between Morocco and Algeria.

However, there were some **positive developments in Mozambique, as in recent years, as well as in Senegal and Ethiopia, the latter in relation to implementation of the agreement in Tigray**. In **Mozambique**, the disarmament and demobilisation of the 5,221 RENAMO combatants and the closure of its 16 military bases was completed. This definitively ended the implementation of the Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation signed in 2019 between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO, which emerged to end the armed conflict that had restarted in the country in 2012. In **Senegal (Casamance)**, in line with the peace agreement reached in 2022, around 250 separatist rebels from the southern region of Casamance, members of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) faction calling itself the Provisional Committee of the Unified Political and Combatant Wings of the MFDC, led by Cesar Atoute Badiate, handed over their weapons in a ceremony that took place at the movement's former base in the town of Mangone in the Bignona area, in southern Senegal. In May, a peace agreement was signed with another MFDC faction, called the Diakaye faction, which was made possible due to the mediation of civil society organisations based in Ziguinchor devoted to peacebuilding in the Senegambia region under the Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC). This agreement provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the delivery of birth certificates to people who did not have access to them due to the instability and measures to ensure the peaceful return of all refugees. Finally, despite the climate of violence surrounding the last Eritrean forces and the Amhara Fano militias and the serious humanitarian situation suffered by the **Ethiopian region of Tigray**, progress was made in implementing the November 2022 peace agreement between the federal government of Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray. In late 2022, the regional government that emerged from the 2020 elections, which was never recognised by the federal government and led to war, was dissolved. Moreover, the restoration of public services began, the distribution of humanitarian aid resumed, although it was interrupted during the year due to the discovery of cases of corruption, and the AU observation mission (AU-MVCM) was launched. Nearly all armed groups and Eritrean forces completely withdrew during 2023 and the effective disarmament of Tigray fighters began in July 2023. In February, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with TPLF leaders for the first time since 2020 and the TPLF agreed on the composition of the interim administration. However, these steps forward were overshadowed by their consequences in the neighbouring region of Amhara due to the escalation of violence by the Fano militias, former allies of the federal government that turned against it due to its plans to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration that straddles territories disputed between both regions.

2.2. Case study analysis

Great Lakes and Central Africa

CAR	
Negotiating actors	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Seleka Coalition, Antibalaka militias
Third parties	The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation (AU and ECCAS, with the support of the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Rep. of the Congo and Chad), Community of Sant Egidio, ACCORD, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; Russia, Sudan
Relevant agreements	Republican pact for peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction in the CAR (2015), Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities (June 2017), Khartoum Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation (Bangui, 6 February 2019)

Summary:

Since gaining independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterized by ongoing political instability, leading to numerous coups d'état and military dictatorships. After the 2005 elections won by François Bozizé, which consolidated the coup d'état perpetrated previously by the latter, several insurgency groups emerged in the north of the country, which historically has been marginalized and is of Muslim majority. In December 2012 these groups forced negotiations to take place. In January 2013, in Libreville, François Bozizé's Government and the coalition of armed groups, called Séléka, agreed to a transition Government, but Séléka decided to break the agreement and took power, overthrowing Bozizé. Nevertheless, self-defence groups ("anti-balaka), sectors in the Army and supporters of Bozizé rebelled against the Séléka Government, creating a climate of chaos and generalized impunity. In December 2014 a new offensive brought an end to the Séléka Government and a transition Government led by Catherine Samba-Panza was instated. Regional leaders, headed by the Congolese Denis Sassou-Nguesso facilitated dialogue initiatives in parallel to the configuration of a national dialogue process, which was completed in May 2015. Some of the agreements reached were implemented, such as the holding of the elections to end the transition phase, but the disarmament and integration of guerrilla members into the security forces is still pending, and contributing to ongoing insecurity and violence. The various regional initiatives have come together in a single negotiating framework, the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation launched in late 2016, under the auspices of the AU and ECCAS with the support of the UN, which established the Libreville Roadmap in July 2017 and that it contributed to reaching the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation of February 2019, in the implementation phase, despite the difficulties. However, in December 2020, representatives of six of the country's most powerful armed groups, including the main groups that signed the 2019 peace agreement (the anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, the 3R, a faction of the FPRC, the MPC and the UPC), denounced its breach by the government, withdrew from the process and created the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), after which hostilities resumed throughout the country, which has been made more complex by the emergence of the Russian private security company Wagner.

The implementation of the 2019 political agreement with the armed groups that had not abandoned the negotiating framework continued slowly during the year.

Clashes continued in the country, especially in the east, where weak government security forces and the Russian private security company Wagner engaged in persistent operations against the main armed groups affiliated with the primary rebel coalition, known as the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), forcibly displacing thousands of people and leading to serious human rights violations by all actors involved in the conflict.

The political situation was dominated by the constitutional referendum that was held on 30 July. The seventh republic was formally established in the Central African Republic when the new Constitution was promulgated on 30 August. The government declared that the constitutional changes reflected popular demand and would allow national development. The political opposition and various civil society organisations, religious associations and various groups have criticised the new Constitution, some of whose provisions continued to cause controversy, such as those relating to the requirements to run for election. Some armed groups and opposition groups, such as the armed coalition CPC, called on the country's population to boycott the referendum. The opposition civil coalition Republican Bloc for the Defence of the Constitution, some civil society organisations and several armed groups that did not sign the 2019 political agreement challenged the results. In his speech to the nation on 31 August, President Touadera repeated his desire to carry out the peace process and the political transformation in the country, basing it on the new Constitution that had been promulgated the day before, and expressly invited the armed groups to rejoin the peace process. An observation mission from the regional organisation ECCAS noted that the conditions for the referendum had been satisfactory.

The new Constitution, which gives more power to the presidency and makes changes that could be interpreted as setbacks for independence between the powers of the state, extended the terms of office of the president and Parliament from five to seven years, eliminated the limitation of successive terms and withdrew parliamentary control from the signing of mining contracts. This prerogative is now in the hands of the president. The Constitution also limited the Senate, which had been established by the 2015 Constitution but had never been created. It also established the creation of a chamber of traditional leaders, among other issues. MINUSCA continued to support the government's local mediation and reconciliation initiatives, including by facilitating meetings of the prefectural monitoring mechanisms of the political agreement reached in 2019. The DDR process continued to move forward very slowly, with around 1,000 combatants completing it between July 2022 and September 2023. As of 1

October, six armed groups and two factions of other groups that signed the 2019 political agreement had been disbanded and fully disarmed and demobilised.

Gender, peace and security

Women accounted for 35% of the members of local peace and reconciliation committees in October, an increase since the signing of the political agreement in 2019, according to the UN. MINUSCA promoted greater female participation in the peace process. For example, on 20 June, it brought together more than 60 women leaders of civil society in Bangui to develop a targeted action plan, among other things, to improve interaction with political authorities and leaders of armed groups. In November, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stated that Mohamed Ag Ayoya, the UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative in the country and humanitarian coordinator of MINUSCA, had indicated in September that the crisis gripping the country, involving serious human rights violations that included different forms of gender violence, climate change, forced displacement and food insecurity for more than half of the population, should be classified not only as a humanitarian crisis, but a "protection and gender crisis". Gender-based violence and sexual violence increased, exacerbated by conflict and the climate crisis, committed not only by armed actors but also by family members on a massive scale. Moreover, the constitutional referendum of July 2023 approved a series of changes that implied the elimination of the Constitutional Court's requirement to be composed of an equal number of men and women, with the consequences that arise in terms of the application of gender-sensitive justice.

Chad	
Negotiating actors	Doha process: Transitional Military Council, 52 armed groups, including the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCSMR), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) DNIS: Transitional Military Council, civil society organisations, 34 of the 52 armed groups that signed the Doha process The 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement formed the Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), including the FACT and the CCSMR
Third parties	Qatar; AU and UN, among others; Community of Sant'Egidio, ECCAS
Relevant agreements	Doha Peace Agreement and the Participation of the Politico-Military Movements in the Chadian National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (2022), National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (2022)

Summary:

Frequently classified as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, Chad has faced a wide, complex and interrelated range of challenges and sources of fragility and instability in recent decades, and has also been the scene of attempts at dialogue and political negotiation. The unstable atmosphere worsened with the death of President Idriss Déby in April 2021 and the subsequent coup d'état by a military council that installed his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, as the new president, suspended the Constitution and replaced it with a transition charter and the promise of free elections in 18 months following the holding of a national dialogue. The Transitional Military Council (CMT) promised to promote a national dialogue in December 2021, in which the different insurgent groups active in the country were intended to participate. In 2022, a peace process was held in Doha (Qatar) under Qatari mediation and an agreement was reached on 7 August with 34 of the 52 insurgent groups, which finally gave way to the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS) between 20 August and 8 October. Different actors participated in the DNIS, including the groups that signed the Doha agreement. The Doha peace process and the DNIS ended with the CMT's mandate being extended for another 24 months under the image of a new government, described as of one national unity, and the continued presidency of Mahamat Déby, who may run in the 2024 election, which has only prolonged the break from the Chadian Constitution that began in April 2021. At the end of the transition (which had been extended by the DNIS), historic demonstrations in October 2022 were heavily repressed, causing many fatalities. The crackdown demonstrated the authoritarian drift of the government and the silencing of the political and social opposition.

The Doha Peace Agreement and the Participation of Political-Military Movements in the national dialogue signed in August 2022 and the subsequent National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS) of 2022 led to the extension of the mandate of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) for a period of 24 months. Reshuffled in October 2022 under the tutelage of President Mahamat Déby, who will be able to run in the elections scheduled for November 2024, the transitional government continued to take action to consolidate power, according to various analysts. The government launched an organising committee for the constitutional referendum, one of the recommendations resulting from the dialogue. The transitional government continued in 2023 with preparations for holding the referendum and on 7 November it announced that the referendum would be held on 17 December. The referendum was boycotted by several opposition and civil society figures, including the leader of the opposition Republican Platform coalition, former Minister Sidick Abdelkereim Haggar, who complained that the draft Constitution focused on a unitary state at the expense of a federal one. They also criticised the lack of participation of the main political actors and the speed in preparing the census, which did not cover the entire electorate, especially in the southern provinces. A group of 15 opposition parties denounced the census preparation process in September.

Various analysts also indicated that Déby had failed to launch the committee that was supposed to follow

up on the resolutions of the Doha peace talks and was not implementing the recommendations of the national dialogue. This was repeated by one of the main signatories of the Doha agreement, the co-leader of the armed group UFR, Timan Erdimi. His brother, Tom Erdimi, was included as a minister in the transitional government. Timan Erdimi argued that the international community had to witness the non-implementation of the agreements. In June and July, Déby retired a hundred generals and promoted a similar number of young officers close to him to the rank of general (around 500 generals in the country, one of the highest figures worldwide in proportion to the size of the army). Meanwhile, the chair of the AU Commission, Chadian politician Moussa Faki, repeated that Chadian military men should not be able to run in the 2024 elections and should hand over power to civilians. In early July, the transitional government established the National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission, in line with the Doha Agreement, as well as another commission on national reconciliation and social cohesion. On 16 October, the transitional authorities declared that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process had begun, as noted by the UN in November.

The transitional government gave out various pardons and decreed an amnesty for those responsible for the anti-government protests of 20 October 2022 and for various political-military actors in different phases. In December 2022, the country's prosecutor's office had convicted 262 people arrested during the protests and ordered the release of another 139 people in a trial that lacked procedural guarantees, according to international standards. The trial of around 400 FACT members captured in April 2021 during the fighting that led to the death of President Idriss Déby took place in February 2023. The defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment. President Mahamat Déby pardoned 380 of them, as well as another 259 activists imprisoned for their participation in the October 2022 protests. FACT leader Mahamat Mahdi Ali, sentenced along with others in absentia, did not receive a pardon. In July, another 110 people were pardoned for their participation in the protests of 20 October 2022.

On 3 November, the authorities allowed Succès Masra, the leader of the opposition party Les Transformateurs, to return to Chad after a year in exile, where he had lived since October 2022 following the crackdown on civil protests that caused dozens of fatalities (hundreds, according to the opposition). The agreement for his return, facilitated by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), includes an amnesty for all military and civilian actors involved in the violent acts of 20 October 2022, and Masra's commitment to support the transition process. On 5 November, the authorities released 72 members of Les Transformateurs who had been detained since 2022. On 19 November, Masra addressed hundreds of his followers in the capital, N'Djamena, and urged reconciliation with the military

rulers. The civil opposition platform movement Wakit Tama refused to recognise the amnesty and the leader of the Les Démocrates party rejected the agreement and urged justice for the victims of the 2022 police crackdown. **Despite the amnesties and pardons, many government opponents remained imprisoned as a result of the October 2022 protests.**

Members of the opposition coalition Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), made up of the 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement (including FACT), met in Rome under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio between 6 and 9 March 2023 to discuss the political and security situation in Chad. They expressed their willingness to commit to negotiations with the transitional authorities with the support of neutral and impartial mediation, though they did not receive any response from the transitional government. In March, an ECCAS delegation visited the country, meeting with representatives of the opposition and civil society as part of its facilitation of the transition, though the CPCR disdained its mediating role due to its support for the conclusions of the DNIS, described as a farce by civil society and the political-military opposition.

Meanwhile, the armed group FACT broke the unilateral ceasefire that it had upheld since April 2021 as a result of the offensive launched by the Libyan National Army and the Chadian Armed Forces in the Tibesti region (north) in August. Although the government had not agreed to any ceasefire with the group, it had released hundreds of its members to facilitate their participation in the Doha process, as well as after the sentencing in March. This offensive weakened the armed group to the point that FACT Secretary-General Mahamat Barh Béchir Kendji surrendered to the Chadian authorities in early November along with hundreds of combatants. On 9 November, the FACT accused Kendji of treason.

Gender, peace and security

With regard to women's participation and the inclusion of the gender perspective, women made up just under 30% of the new transitional government formed in October 2022. There was only one woman representative of the actors in the Doha peace process, according to the United Nations. Women and youth organisations participated in the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS), but their positions were not present in the conclusions of the DNIS and it is unknown if there were any women on the organising committee for the referendum. At the beginning of the year, the government presented its National Action Plan to promote the women, peace and security agenda, the preparation of which had the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Swiss and Spanish cooperation. Chad's Minister of Women, Protection of Early Childhood and National Solidarity

Amina Priscille Longoh explained that the process of preparing the 1325 NAP began in 2019 with a mapping of priorities and local and sectoral consultations before work began to draft the document, its budget and its technical and political sections. The minister thanked the partners for their support, as well as the inter-ministerial committee responsible for drafting the document, which was presented by the coordinator of the committee and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Gender, Family and Solidarity Apoline Moudalbaye. As part of the EU-funded “Supporting Democratic Transition in Chad” programme, International IDEA Chad organised a national training workshop in October on strengthening women’s leadership with a view to encouraging women to run as candidates in the 2024 elections. It was attended by 50 women from political parties that support the transition, opposition political parties, civil society organisations and female executives from the Ministry of Women, Protection of Early Childhood and National Solidarity and the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion.

DRC	
Negotiating actors	Government of the DRC, government of Rwanda, armed group M23, armed groups from the eastern part of the country, political opposition and civil society
Third parties	AU, SADC, International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), EAC, EU, UN, OIF, USA, Angola, Qatar
Relevant agreements	Sun City Agreement, Pretoria Agreement and Luanda Agreement (2002); Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC (2002); Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (2013), Comprehensive, Inclusive Peace Accord in the DRC (2016), Luanda Agreement (2022)

Summary:

The demands for democratization in the nineties led to a succession of rebellions that culminated with the coup d’état carried out by Laurent Desiré Kabila between 1996 and 1997 against Mobutu Sese Seko. Later, what is sometimes called the First African World War (1998-2003), broke out what is sometimes called the First African World War (1998-2003) broke out because of the participation of a dozen countries in the region and numerous armed groups. The signing of a ceasefire in 1999, and of several peace agreements between 2002 and 2003, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops, the setting up of a transitional government and later an elected government, in 2006. However, did not mean the end of violence in this country, due to the role played by Rwanda and the presence of factions of non-demobilised groups and of the FDLR, responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The breach of the 2009

peace accords led to the 2012 desertion of soldiers of the former armed group CNDP, forming part of the Congolese army, citing threats against and the marginalisation of their community and organised a new rebellion called the 23 March Movement (M23), promoted by Rwanda in 2012. In December 2013, the rebellion was defeated and some of its members fled to Rwanda and Uganda. Nevertheless, the violent and unstable atmosphere persisted and the M23 resumed its attacks in late 2021. In 2022, the EAC activated two processes to promote peace in the region: a dialogue process with armed groups in the eastern DRC in Nairobi and the Luanda process, between DRC and Rwanda. It also sent a military mission against groups that did not accept the Nairobi process, such as the M23.

During the year, international pressure remained on Rwanda to discontinue its support for the armed group March 23 Movement (M23) and regional and international initiatives continued to be carried out to promote a dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda. In October, fighting intensified in the eastern DRC, mainly involving the M23. The violence and escalating fighting took place amidst the electoral campaign, which was seriously affected by a climate of political violence. Félix Tshisekedi won the election on 20 December 2023, which was plagued by irregularities and accusations of fraud.⁷ However, the Luanda process, the dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda for its support for the group M23, as part of which the Luanda agreement was reached in 2022 and a ceasefire by the M23 was achieved but was not respected, remained at a standstill in 2023. The Nairobi process, consisting of initiatives for inter-Congolese dialogue between the government, civil society and armed groups, including the M23, was also deadlocked throughout the year.⁸ In January 2023, Qatar tried to give continuity and support to Angola’s efforts to promote a political dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, but the direct meeting between the presidents of both countries, scheduled for 23 January, was postponed due to Congolese absence. The EAC summits on 4 and 17 February failed in their attempts to reach a ceasefire. It was not until March that a fragile ceasefire was achieved, led by Angolan President João Lorenço.

In early March, Lorenço announced a ceasefire between the M23 and the FARDC, which would come into force from 7 March, coinciding with the deployment of the EAC’s regional military presence (without a mandate to use force), composed of Burundian, Ugandan and South Sudanese forces. The ceasefire failed a few days later,⁹ although the M23 carried out a strategic withdrawal and reduced its activities as the deployment of the EAC force was completed, which ended in April. Between April and October, clashes between the government and the M23 decreased, although it continued to fight

7 See the summary on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

8 See the summary on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*; Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

9 Asmahan Qarjouly, “Violence in DRC intensifies as Qatar takes steps to mediate”, *Doha News*, 20 March 2023.

against local pro-government armed groups for control of territory in North Kivu province.

Different regional initiatives were held to try to relaunch the peace negotiations during this period and international pressure on Rwanda increased, though the Luanda and Nairobi processes that began in 2022 remained at an impasse. An extraordinary ICGLR summit was held on 3 June in Luanda to discuss the DRC and Sudan, with Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente taking part in place of President Paul Kagame. A quadripartite summit of the ICGLR, SADC, EAC and ECCAS was also held in Angola on 27 June under the auspices of the AU, in which the participants promised to improve coordination of all peace efforts and initiatives for the eastern DRC. International pressure increased following the UN Group of Experts' ratification of Rwanda's support for the M23 in June.¹⁰ The EU and the US imposed sanctions on senior Rwandan and Congolese military officials and members of armed groups. The US also restricted military cooperation with Rwanda. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, openly condemned Rwanda's support for the M23 and the Rwandan Army's presence in the DRC on 7 July, while US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken held talks with Rwandan President Paul Kagame to try to ease tensions and seek a diplomatic solution.

In September, the M23 cast off the low profile that had characterised it for much of the year. On 18 September, it announced that it had taken over the town of Kiwanja, which was nominally under the control of the EAC regional mission. In September, the mandate of the regional mission was extended by three months until December, though its role on the ground remained symbolic. In October, the M23's offensive resumed after six months of tense calm in North Kivu province (east). The de facto ceasefire collapsed and both the M23 and the Wazalendo pro-government coalition of armed groups resumed their armed activity in different locations. The reopening of hostilities increased the hostile rhetoric between Kigali and Kinshasa, leading the UN special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Huang Xia, to warn of the real risk of a direct conflict between Rwanda and the DRC, citing the mobilisation of troops that both countries had undertaken, the absence of a direct high-level dialogue between them and the persistence of hate speech. President Tshisekedi and other candidates during the Congolese election campaign used the conflict to mobilise the population of the eastern part of

the country, promising an offensive against Rwanda in the event of electoral victory.

On 6 October, following the quadripartite summit on 27 June, the chiefs of defence staff of the EAC, ECCAS, ICGLR and SADC met in Addis Abeba under the auspices of the AU and with the participation of the UN to coordinate and harmonise the peace initiatives in the eastern DRC. The participants agreed to ensure harmonisation of the withdrawal schedule for existing field missions and planned force deployments, maintain dialogue in the political track of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, accelerate efforts to establish humanitarian corridors and return to meet before the end of the year. As a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the discredited EAC mission, which had been unable to stop the actions of the M23, the DRC said that its mandate would end in December as established. On 21 December, it **completed its withdrawal from the country amid accusations that Burundian troops were collaborating with the Congolese Armed Forces** instead of respecting the mission's mandate.

Composed of troops from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and South Sudan, the mission was supposed to regain the positions previously occupied by the M23 rebels after they had defeated the FARDC soldiers and establish a security zone to avoid new clashes between the M23 and the FARDC. Meanwhile, the DRC maintained contacts so that the SADC could deploy a military mission in the eastern part of the country.

As part of the Congolese electoral campaign, the US has been facilitating contacts between the DRC and Rwanda since mid-November. **The US attempted to promote a ceasefire during the elections, which was used by the M23 to reinforce its positions around Sake, with support from Rwanda.**¹¹

Gender, peace and security

Local and international civil society representatives addressed the UN Security Council in December to press the need for the ongoing Luanda and Nairobi political negotiating processes to be more inclusive and be led by local peacebuilders and members of civil society, especially women and young people. In this armed conflict, women and girls have been seriously affected since sexual and gender violence has remained high and has even been increasing. The speakers added that armed groups continued to kidnap and recruit minors. The armed violence in the region continued to

10. UN Security Council, *Informe final del Grupo de Expertos, presentado de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el párrafo 9 de la resolución 2641 (2022)*, 13 June 2023.

11. Reuters, "Exclusive: Eastern Congo ceasefire extended for two weeks, US official says", *Reuters*, 15 December 2023.

intensify in an already hyper-militarised context where permanent flows of weapons and a persisting state of siege only exacerbated the situation. The civil society representatives said that the country's civil society needs international support, especially given the escalation of violence and the announced withdrawal of MONUSCO from the country during 2024, which could cause a potential security vacuum. A follow-up meeting was held on 19 October between a hundred female candidates, officials and experts from civil society and MONUSCO, following a first discussion in September between the special representative and 20 female political candidates on the challenges faced by the women in the electoral context. Despite the zero tolerance policy pursued by the United Nations, during the year MONUSCO reported new complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse due to events that occurred between 2011 and 2023 that involved members of the military and civilian components of the mission.

South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): Government (SPLM), SPLM/A-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others), two independent factions of the SPLM-IO: the Kitgwang faction led by Simon Gatwech Dual and the faction headed by General Johnson Olony. Peace talks in Rome: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously SSOMA): National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the Real SPLM, South Sudan People's Patriotic Movement (SSPPM).
Third parties	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): IGAD Plus (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda), AU (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), China, Russia, Egypt, Troika (USA, United Kingdom and Norway), EU, UN, South Sudan Council of Churches, Rome negotiations: Community of Sant'Egidio
Relevant agreements	Peace Agreement (2015), Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (2017), Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (2018)

Summary:

After years of armed conflict between the Central Government of Sudan and the south of the country, led by the SPLM/A guerrilla, South Sudan became an independent State in 2011, after holding the referendum that was planned in the 2005 peace agreement (Comprehensive Peace Agreement –CPA–) facilitated by the mediation of the IGAD. The Peace between Sudan and South Sudan and achieving independence was not achieved, however, were not enough to end the conflict and violence. South Sudan has remained immersed in a series of internal conflicts promoted by disputes

to control the territory, livestock and political power, as well as by neopatrimonial practices and corruption in the Government, 42 Peace Talks in Focus 2021 all of which has impeded stability and the consolidation of peace. As part of the peace negotiations promoted in April 2013, the President offered an amnesty for six commanders of the rebel groups, but this was not successful initially. However, at a later date, in December 2013, tensions broke out among the factions loyal to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to the former Vice-President Riek Machar, leader of the SPL/A-inOpposition (SPLA-IO), which gave way to a new escalation of violence in several of the country's regions. In January 2014, with the mediation of the IGAD, the Government and the SPLAIO launched peace conversations in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Diplomatic efforts were found against many obstacles to achieve effective ceasefire agreements, after signing nine different commitments to the cessation of hostilities and transitory measures between December 2013 and August 2015, which were systematically violated and have rendered it impossible to lay the foundations for a political solution to the conflict. On 17 August 2015, after strong international pressure and threats of blockades and economic sanctions, the parties signed a peace agreement promoted by the IGAD Plus, although there is still much uncertainty surrounding its implementation, as well as other later agreements. Subsequently, new agreements were reached between the parties, such as the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (2017) and the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R -ARCSS) (2018), which open new paths to try to end the violence. Since 2019, the government has held peace talks in Rome with the groups that did not sign the R-ARCSS.

Some progress was made in implementing the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) during the year and the presidential election was confirmed for December 2024. The original three-year transition period set out in the R-ARCSS ended on 22 February and the extended 24-month transition period began, which will end on 22 February 2025, as agreed by the parties according to the road map. Early in the year, the Transitional Government reported new progress linked to the implementation of the R-ARCSS, including President Salva Kiir's signing of 10 important bills on 1 January, such as the Constitution Making Process Bill and the Law on Political Parties. However, it was not until 6 June that the High-Level Standing Committee on the Road Map, composed of the parties that had signed the R-ARCSS, held the inaugural consultative meeting to form the Reconstituted National Constitutional Review Commission, six months after it was first announced. On 4 July 4, President Kiir confirmed that presidential election would be held in December 2024 and said that he would run for president. His announcement raised significant doubts among national and international actors about the country's ability to hold free, fair and credible elections due to delays in the implementation of some clauses of the peace agreement. Nicholas Haysom, the head of the United Nations mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), said that to meet the conditions to hold the elections with guarantees, the

country had to make headway in the new constitutional framework, detail the registration of voters (including a mechanism to guarantee the participation of refugees), develop an electoral security plan, make progress in constituting the Unified Armed Forces and produce a mechanism for resolving disputes about the results.¹² Later, on 18 September, the Revitalised Transitional National Legislative Assembly passed the National Election Act, creating controversy due to some unilateral clauses inserted by Kiir. The opposition condemned the vote and the SPLA-IO headed by Vice President Riek Machar boycotted it. On 3 November, the National Electoral Commission, the National Constitutional Review Commission and the Council of Political Parties were reconstituted. The latter institution was the only one that respected the quota of 35% of women in its composition, as agreed in the R-ARCSS.

The second and third quarters of the year were marked by new tensions between the main parties that had signed the R-ARCSS: the SPLM led by President Kiir and the SPLA-IO led by Vice President Machar, which threatened the unity of the transitional government. The crisis broke out in early March when Kiir dismissed Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs Angelina Teny and Minister of the Interior Mahmoud Solomon, both appointed by the SPLA-IO. The SPLA-IO complained that this was a violation of the peace agreement and it produced significant political tensions between the parties during the year. The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission also determined that the dismissals and the withdrawal of the ministries from the SPLA-IO was a violation of the R-ARCSS. Finally, on 27 September, Kiir appointed Angelina Teny as Minister of the Interior, ending the crisis.

Meanwhile, the SPLA-IO continued to suffer major internal fragmentation that weakened it. On 7 June, President Kiir and Johnson Olony, the leader of the Shilluk Agwalek militia, a splinter group of the SPLA-IO and the Kitgwang faction,¹³ agreed to officially integrate Agwalek fighters into the South Sudanese Armed Forces. In October, two other important defectors from the SPLA-IO went on to support the government faction led by Kiir: Simon Maguek Gai, the commander of Unity State, and Michael Wal Nyak, the commander of Jonglei State, which drastically reduced the military capacity of the SPLA-IO in both states. Tensions between Machar's forces and Gai's forces led to fighting in Unity State for the rest of the year, pushing the SPLA-IO out of all its military positions except Panyijiar County, its last stronghold in Unity.

Coinciding with Pope Francis' visit to South Sudan, on 3 February President Kiir formally lifted the suspension of the peace talks in Rome that the South Sudanese government has held since 2019 under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio with the groups that did not sign the R-ARCSS, represented by the Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups coalition (NSSSOG). Suspended since late November 2022, they resumed between 21 and 23 March, though no agreement on their agenda was reached. They were suspended again and no significant progress was reported for the rest of the year.

Gender, peace and security

In March, South Sudan finalised the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (better known as the Maputo Protocol).¹⁴ The ratification, a decade after it was signed by the South Sudanese government in January 2013, mandates a commitment to gender equality and urges the country's authorities to adopt effective policies and strategies to ensure that the protocol makes a difference in people's lives. Also in March, South Sudan's Ministry of Gender, Children and Welfare approved the second national action plan on the women, peace and security agenda (2023-2027). Though the first plan (2015-2020) was approved in 2015, the resurgence of the conflict a year later slowed down its implementation. The new action plan calls on the government to fund its implementation, rather than relying on donors, and foresees its development at the state and local levels so that its activities focus more on the real situations faced by local communities.

In mid-December, members of the UN Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security visited the country and met with government officials, representatives of civil society and women's associations, UNMISS, UN Women and other UN agencies in South Sudan. The purpose of the visit was to learn about the situation of women and girls in the current political context and the implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement (R-ARCSS) related to gender.¹⁵ Although the agreement includes a 35% quota for women in all executive and transition institutions and processes, it has not been fulfilled in most of the commissions created to implement the peace agreement, the current government or Parliament. In the bodies created during 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was only met in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the

12 UN News, "South Sudan: No basis for free and fair 2024 elections, warns Haysom", 14 December 2023.

13 On 9 August 2022, General Gatwech Dual, the leader of the Kitgwang faction, a SPLA-IO splinter group, removed General Johnson Olony as his deputy, motivating the formation of a new Kitgwang faction.

14 Nyagoah Tut Pur, "South Sudan Ratifies Crucial African Women's Rights Treaty", *Human Rights Watch*, 8 June 2023.

15 UN Women Africa, "Members of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security visit South Sudan", 15 December 2023.

National Constitutional Review Commission (32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%). This was also not true in the election of state governors, where only one of South Sudan's 10 governors is a woman.

Sudan ¹⁶	
Negotiating actors	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government of Sudan, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur), Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu factions National crisis peace negotiations: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)
Third parties	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, IGAD, UNITAMS National crisis peace negotiations: Trilateral mechanism (UNITAMS, AU and IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)); Quad (USA, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Egypt
Relevant agreements	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) (2006), Road map Agreement (2016), the Juba Declaration for Confidence-Building Procedures and the Preparation for Negotiation (2019), Juba Peace Agreement (2020)

Summary:

Different armed conflicts (Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan) remain active in the country, as well as tensions between the government and the opposition which have led to different peace negotiations and a de-escalation of violence. In Darfur, amidst peace talks to resolve the historical dispute between the north and south of the country, which ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, various armed groups, mainly the JEM and the SLA, rebelled in 2003 around demands for greater decentralisation and development in the region. The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was reached in 2006, which included only one SLA faction, led by Minni Minnawi, while the conflict persisted amidst frustrated attempts at dialogue, mainly promoted by Qatar as part of the Doha peace process, in which the different parties were involved. Furthermore, in the Two Areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), the secession

of South Sudan in July 2011 and the resulting national reconfiguration of Sudan aggravated tensions between those border regions and the Sudanese government, since both regions had supported the southern SPLA insurgency during the Sudanese armed conflict. The African Union High Level Panel on Sudan (AUHIP) has mediated to seek a peaceful resolution between the parties (government and SPLM/N rebellion) that revolve around three main lines in the peace negotiations: the ceasefire model, the type of humanitarian access to the Two Areas and the characteristics and agenda of the National Dialogue. In early 2014, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir asked all armed actors and opposition groups to join the National Dialogue. From the outset, the proposal involved former South African President Thabo Mbeki and the AUHIP to promote peace negotiations and a democratic transformation. After the fall of the al-Bashir regime in April 2019, the different peace processes and scenarios between the new transitional government and the different rebel groups in the Two Areas and Darfur have merged, achieving the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020. However, several armed groups, including the SPLM-N alHilu (Two Areas) and the SLM/A-AW (Darfur), refused to sign the peace agreement, holding the talks separately. In 2022, due to the governance crisis in the country provoked by the military junta's rise to power, talks began between the junta and political and military actors to achieve the political transition, which incorporated a review of the Juba Agreement for Peace. In 2023, the negotiations broke down with the outbreak of a new armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF), giving rise to new mediation initiatives.

The negotiations promoted with the military junta and part of the Sudanese political opposition aimed at achieving the political transition and establishing a civilian government in Sudan fell apart after the outbreak of a new armed conflict in the country on 15 April that pitted the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) against the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In late 2022, after a year of negotiations sponsored by different actors in different formats,¹⁷ a framework agreement had been reached to create a transitional civilian government with elections in two years. This agreement gave rise to a second phase of negotiations that began on 9 January 2023 and was focused on five issues that had been pending: transitional justice, security sector reform, the Juba Agreement for Peace, the dismantling of the previous regime of Omar al-Bashir and the crisis in eastern Sudan. Hard-won progress was made in the pending negotiations during the first quarter of the year and tensions gradually increased between the parties, especially between the military leaders, the chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and head of

16 In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

17 The negotiations to achieve a transitional government were promoted through an intra-Sudanese peace initiative known as the trilateral mechanism, sponsored by UNITAMS, the AU and the IGAD, as well as through informal conversations between the military junta and the Central Council of Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC-CC), in what was known as the Quad mediation bloc, which included the US, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as third parties.

the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the deputy chairman of the Council and leader of the RSF, Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo.

One of the main reasons for the rise in tensions was the disagreements between the military parties in reforming the security sector, especially regarding the deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national army and the establishment of the command structure. In early April, rumours spread about the mobilisation of military personnel from both sides in Khartoum and Darfur. These rumours caused different national and international actors to intensify contacts with the military parties to de-escalate the tension. They included different leaders of armed movements that had signed the peace agreement, such as Gibril Ibrahim, the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and current minister of finance; Malik Agar, the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)-Malik Agar faction and member of the Transitional Sovereignty Council; and Minni Minawi, the governor of the Darfur region and leader of the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi faction (SLA-MM), who formed a national mediation committee. On 13 April, Germany, France, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union issued a joint statement calling on Sudanese military and civilian leaders to take steps to reduce tensions and to work together to resolve issues related to reforming the security sector.¹⁸ However, despite the different initiatives, armed clashes broke out between the SAF led by al-Burhan and the RSF commanded by Dagalo on 15 April. Initially the hostilities were concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, but during the year they intensified and spread throughout almost the entire country.¹⁹

The outbreak of fighting prompted different actors to undertake different mediation efforts and initiatives to end the hostilities and resume peace negotiations. These attempts continued throughout the year, but they did not stop the war. Though the warring parties agreed to different ceasefires during the year (24 and 27-30 April; 4-11 and 22-31 May; 20 and 26-27 June, among others), most lasted a maximum of 72 hours and in no case did the violence end permanently, as violations by both parties continued. There were also different attempts to impose humanitarian truces, though they yielded few results.

The outbreak of armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) sank negotiations on the political transition and the establishment of a civilian government in Sudan

Despite the AU's initial attempts to guarantee a coordinated mediation process, different negotiating tracks were launched that conflicted at times. For example, the US and Saudi Arabia promoted “pre-negotiation talks” between the parties in the city of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on 6 May. These talks led to the signing of the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan on 11 May. However, in early June the co-facilitators temporarily suspended the talks due to “repeated serious violations” committed by both sides and the US announced that it was imposing sanctions on four companies affiliated with the warring parties.

In the meantime, on 16 April the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched a high-level initiative to mediate between the parties made up of the presidents of Kenya, South Sudan and Djibouti, which would later also be expanded to Ethiopia. The AU and its Peace and Security Council (PSC) also positioned themselves as mediating actors. On 16 April, the PSC decided to undertake a field mission to establish contacts with interested parties. On 27 May, it approved a road map to resolve the conflict in six parts: the establishment of a coordination mechanism to harmonise mediation efforts, a cease-fire, an effective humanitarian response, the protection of civilians and civil infrastructure, the strategic role of neighbouring countries and the region and the resumption of a credible and inclusive political transition. Later, on 12 June, the IGAD Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government also adopted a road map to resolve the conflict, appointing Kenyan President William Ruto to lead it. The Sudanese Army rejected the road map, as it opposed making the Kenyan president the head of the initiative.

In mid-July, Egypt also announced its own mediation initiative, receiving leaders from Sudan’s neighbouring countries on 13 July. On 29 August, al-Burhan, who days before managed to break the RSF siege on the headquarters where he had been holed up for months, travelled to Egypt to hold talks with his counterpart. Days earlier, on 27 August, the RSF said it was willing to engage in peace talks, presenting a 10-point plan for a “lasting peace” that al-Burhan rejected.

The second round of peace talks took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 26 October to 7 November, with the IGAD, the AU, the US and Saudi Arabia acting as co-facilitators, though no progress was achieved. A face-to-face meeting in Djibouti between SAF and RSF

18. Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan*, S/2023/355, 16 May 2023.

19. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

leaders was announced at the end of the year, but it was postponed for “technical reasons”. This meeting would have been the first time that al-Burhan and Dagalo had met since the start of the war. Finally, at the end of the year, Dagalo toured the region to gather support and was received by the leaders of Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and South Africa, which al-Burhan described as “acts of hostility”. On 2 January 2024, the RSF met in Addis Abeba with the Sudanese civil coalition led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, head of the Coordination of Democratic Civil Forces, also known as Taqaddum, and signed the Addis Abeba Declaration, which included commitments to return millions of displaced people to their homes, create safe corridors and include civilians in peace talks. After the agreement was signed, which is intended to serve as a basis for future negotiations and achieve a political agreement, the paramilitary group announced that it was open to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to enter into talks with the SAF.²⁰

As mediation efforts failed, the conflict between the SAF and RSF intensified and the fighting involved other armed groups in regions such as South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur, which witnessed the worst violence since the civil war. Though several armed groups that had signed the Juba Agreement for Peace, including those led by Minni Minawi, Gibril Ibrahim and Malik Agar, declared their opposition to the war and their neutrality when the fighting first broke out, as the months passed they took part in the hostilities. In November, following the advance of the RSF in the Darfur region, the Darfuri groups that had signed the Juba Agreement for Peace renounced neutrality and joined the SAF, expanding the conflict.

Gender, peace and security

Since the start of the armed clashes between the SAF and the RSF, different initiatives led by women emerged that called for a ceasefire, highlighted humanitarian needs and condemned sexual violence related to the conflict. They also demanded the participation of women in the ceasefire negotiations and any future political process and denounced the failure to include women in these spaces. For example, on 13 July, 75 civil society organisations, including political forces, women’s rights groups, youth networks, resistance committees, civil society groups and academics issued a Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan. In late October, UN Women partnered with the IGAD, the AU and the Women’s International Peace Centre to organise a conference with Sudanese women peacebuilders in Kampala (Uganda) that involved over 400 women from 14 Sudanese states. The conference aimed to build bridges between women in Sudan and other countries in the region and highlighted the leadership role that

Sudanese women and girls are playing in the peace movement.²¹

Meanwhile, the Sudanese Ministry of Social Affairs’ Violence Against Women Unit reported an increase in acts of gender violence allegedly perpetrated by the RSF and related combatants in Khartoum, South Darfur and Western Darfur. Human rights organisations also estimated that the number of people who needed gender violence prevention and response services in 2023 increased by more than one million as a result of the conflict, placing the figure at 4.2 million people across the country. They also reported that the growth of insecurity throughout the country and attacks on hospitals drastically reduced the ability to provide services to survivors.

Sudan – South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan, ethnic communities of the Abyei region
Third parties	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU, UNISFA, UN
Relevant agreements	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (2005); Cooperation Agreement (2012), Joint Boundary Demarcation Agreement (2019)

Summary:

The armed conflict between Sudan and its southern neighbour (South Sudan) lasted for more than 30 years and was marked by a growing complexity, the nature of which covered several dimensions relating to the culture and history of both countries, affected by two civil wars (1963-1972; and 1982-2005). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 led to a referendum in the south of Sudan to ratify the independence of this region. The consultation happened in January 2011 and following a clear victory of those in favour of independence, in July 2011 South Sudan declared independence and became a new State. However, the separation of the two countries did not bring an end to the disagreements between Khartoum and Juba over the many unresolved issues. Among the main obstacles to stability there is a dispute over the oil-rich enclave of Abyei and the final demarcation of the border between both countries, as well as disagreement with regards to the exploitation of oil resources (with oil fields in South Sudan but pipelines for exportation to Sudan). Both countries accuse one another of supporting insurgency movements in the neighbour country and have contributed to further destabilizing the situation and threaten the peaceful coexistence of these two countries.

The outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan made it difficult to make progress in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, especially linked to the resolution of the dispute over the Abyei region, though headway was made in resolving intercommunity disputes. According to the UN Secretary-General’s 2023 reports of the situation in Abyei, while the first period, from 4 October 2022 to 18 April 2023, was

20 Reuters, “Sudan’s RSF open to talks on immediate ceasefire with army”, 3 January 2024.

21 UN Women Africa, “Sudanese women advocate for peace at conference in Uganda”, 22 December 2023.

characterised by high-level contacts between Sudan and South Sudan aimed at enhancing cooperation regarding Abyei and border issues and paving the way for deliberations on its final status, the second period, from 19 April to 3 October 2023, was notable for the impasse in the Abyei political process due to the outbreak of fighting on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, which continued throughout the year.²²

These clashes intensified just days after the second round of the Sudan-South Sudan High-Level Committee talks on Abyei, held on 9 and 10 April in Khartoum. The meeting was led by the deputy chairman of the Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council and head of the RSF and by the presidential national security advisor of South Sudan and was attended by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, the UN Mission in Abyei (UNISFA), the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). During the meeting, the parties repeated their commitment to constructive collaboration and agreed that the issue of Abyei's final status would be examined in upcoming rounds of talks, which were interrupted by the violence. Previously, on 12 January 2023, the president of South Sudan and the chairman of Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council had discussed the situation in Abyei and some measures that could be taken to improve border cooperation during a bilateral meeting in Juba, including the formation of a joint security force along the border between both countries. However, rather than progressing, the 2011 Agreement on the Transitional Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area was reportedly violated during the year. The agreement provides for demilitarised and weapons-free status for Abyei. Both sides positioned troops and security personnel in the southern and northern part of Abyei.

Some progress was observed in resolving cross-border intracommunity disputes and tension between Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities, and between Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities, all of which caused clashes to decrease considerably. After months of tension between members of the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities affecting the southern part of the Abyei area and the northern part of Warrap State (South Sudan), which began over a land dispute in February 2022, several peace initiatives were developed during the year. On 20 March, the president

Progress was made in resolving disputes and tensions between Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities, and between the Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities in border areas of Sudan and South Sudan

of South Sudan summoned the governors of Warrap and Lakes states, the Juba-appointed chief administrator of Abyei and the traditional leaders of the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities to discuss their disputes. The latter committed to ending hostilities and agreed to deploy security forces in the disputed areas to create a buffer zone. Subsequently, due to the persisting tensions, a peace conference was held between 3 and 6 April in Wau (South Sudan), where the parties once again agreed to cease hostilities. Finally, between 7 and 9 August, reconciliation talks were held again between both communities in Wau, where a ceasefire and freedom of movement between the areas affected by tensions were agreed, among other points.

Between 20 and 23 March, a peace conference was held between the Dinka Ngok and Miseriya communities in Todach (Abyei area) that resulted in the signing of an agreement that included a cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, the need to reactivate the joint community peace committee and continuation of the peace talks. Later, between 7 and 9 June, UNISFA, Concordis International and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) jointly organised a transhumance corridor conference between the Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities in which representatives of both communities agreed on concrete measures to guarantee peaceful transhumance.

Gender, peace and security

In relation to progress made in implementing the women, peace and security agenda, UNISFA reported that traditional and local authorities, women's networks and civil society were encouraged to get involved in issues related to women and peace and security in the region during the year, prioritising the promotion of women's participation in conflict management structures and defending the inclusion of women in local administrations. For example, two of the eight ministerial positions in the new cabinet of the Abyei administration appointed by South Sudan were assigned to women. UNISFA also held nine meetings with 117 women from various sectors between April and August and facilitated three monthly meetings of the joint women's peace committee. Finally, 87 women joined the community protection committees established in northern Abyei to resolve intercommunity disputes during the year, representing 25% of their members.

²² See the summary on Sudan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Negotiating actors	Federal government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)
Third parties	IGAD, Kenya, Norway and Tanzania
Relevant agreements	Peace agreement between the federal government and the OLF (2018)

Summary:

Attempts to accommodate the Oromo community within the Ethiopian federal state after the extensive demonstrations that began in 2014 led to the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo community, and the political reforms he pushed to promote national unity and reconciliation. This resulted in a peace agreement in 2018 with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a rebel group that emerged in 1973, which facilitated the return of its members from exile.²³ However, this did not lead to greater autonomy for the region, as Oromo nationalists hoped. Abiy Ahmed centralised the government further, instead of deepening ethnic federalism. Furthermore, although the OLF became a political party, its military wing, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), rejected the agreement and started a new rebellion, leading the government to list it as a terrorist group in May 2021. Since then, violence has been on the rise. Supported by the Amhara Fano militias, the federal government launched a military operation to dismantle the OLA in April 2022. The escalating clashes during the second half of 2022 coincided with negotiations that culminated in the peace agreement in November 2022 between the federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region. Since then, there have been contacts between the government and the OLA to promote a peace agreement.

After the peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the political and military authorities of Tigray on 2 November 2022 and its implementation began, the federal authorities escalated the war against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), the military wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had previously reached a peace agreement with Addis Abeba in 2018. Local government pressure on the region of Oromia, as well as the interest of the OLA and the federal authorities in reaching some kind of truce, led to several indirect exploratory contacts between both parties, which expressed their interest in a cessation of hostilities in February 2023. In the midst of the climate of violence, in March Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed his commitment to exploring a negotiating process with the OLA. On 25 April, peace talks began in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya (the OLA had demanded third-party mediation)²⁴ on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Norway.²⁵ Although this first round ended without progress in early May, both parties were committed to seeking a solution to the conflict.²⁶ Since then, clashes have persisted with serious consequences for the civilian population.

However, a second negotiating round that began in Tanzania in late October under the mediation of the IGAD was made public in November.²⁷ Anonymous diplomatic sources were optimistic about progress in the negotiating process.

Gender, peace and security

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice through the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJ-WGE) and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the UN Women office in Ethiopia organised a high-level national consultation with women from diverse backgrounds to discuss policy options on transitional justice to ensure women's participation in the development of an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy for Ethiopia. The event was held from 9 to 10 June 2023, in Bishoftu, Oromia and was attended by 60 female participants, including members of female-led civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, women's advocacy groups and feminist groups, women influencers, university professors, human rights defenders, media professionals, service providers for survivors of violence, community representatives and members of UN agencies.

Ethiopia (Tigray)	
Negotiating actors	Federal Government, political-military authorities of the Ethiopian region of Tigray (Tigray People's Liberation Front)
Third parties	AU, USA, IGAD
Relevant agreements	Agreement for a Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (Pretoria, 2022), Executive Declaration on the Modalities of Implementation of the Agreement for a Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities (Nairobi, 2022)

Summary:

The region of Tigray (a state in northern Ethiopia, bordering Ethiopia and with a Tigray -majority population) has been the scene of an armed conflict and attempts at dialogue initiatives since 2020. The inauguration of Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia in early 2018 brought about important and positive changes internally and regionally in Ethiopia. However, since his rise to power, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party and the leadership of the Tigray community, once the solid core of the ruling coalition (EPRDF), have seen their government decision-making powers evaporate. Furthermore, the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia between 1998 and 2000 had its origin in border disputes between the two countries. As a border state where decisions related to the agreement

23 Al-Jazeera, "Ethiopia signs deal with Oromo rebels to end hostilities", *Al-Jazeera*, 7 August 2018.

24 OLA Command, "Regarding Peace Negotiations", OLF-OLA Press Release, 23 April 2023.

25 Kombe, Charles, "Peace Talks Between Ethiopian Government, OLA Continue in Tanzania", *VOA*, 27 April 2023.

26 Paravicini, Giulia, "First round of peace talks between Ethiopia and Oromo rebels ends without deal", *Reuters*, 3 May 2023.

27 Africanews, "Second round of talks between Ethiopian government and Oromo rebels", *Africanews*, 9 November 2023.

between Eritrea and Ethiopia must be implemented, such as the border demarcation and status of the town of Badme, Tigray was marginalised from the peace process between both governments. Added to this was the gradual marginalisation of the TPLF from central power, contributing to growing tension that culminated in the outbreak of an armed conflict between the Ethiopian security forces and the security forces of the Tigray region. The crisis took on regional dimensions due to the involvement of Eritrea, as well as militias and security forces from the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara. Since the beginning of the armed conflict in November 2020, the international community, and especially the AU, have tried to promote peace negotiations between the parties, which the Federal Government of Ethiopia rejected. Between March and August 2022, a humanitarian truce was in force, after which there was a new escalation of violence. In late October 2022, peace negotiations were formalised in Pretoria (South Africa) under the auspices of the AU, which led to the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in November. The peace agreement has been implemented since then, though not without difficulties.

Despite the beginning of the implementation of the peace agreement reached on 2 November 2022 between the Ethiopian government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region, atrocities against the civilian population continued, including sexual violence against women and girls committed by Eritrean forces and by the Amhara Fano paramilitary militias, according to the UN. The federal government of Ethiopia took a transitional justice approach towards a conflict that has caused around 110,000 deaths since 2020, according to the UCDP, making it one of the most serious conflicts today. After the agreement was signed, there were some initial violations of the ceasefire in late 2022 by the Ethiopian and Eritrean security forces and the militias of the Amhara community against the TPLF and against the civilian population, revealing the difficulties in implementing this agreement and the fragility of the situation.

Despite the climate of violence and the serious humanitarian situation, the political and military leaders of Tigray agreed to the effective disarmament of its combatants and began to do so, though their demobilisation did not start to become effective until July 2023. At the end of 2022, they dissolved the regional government that emerged from the 2020 elections (not recognised by the federal government and which led to war) and the World Food Programme (WFP) began to distribute humanitarian aid. On 12 November 2022, the parties signed the Executive Declaration on the Modalities for the Implementation of the Agreement in Nairobi, which provided for the delivery of heavy weapons and the demobilisation of combatants, the reestablishment of public services in

Progress was made in implementing the peace agreement between the federal government of Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, though Eritrean forces and the Fano militias continued to commit atrocities against the civilian population

Tigray, the reactivation of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of all armed groups and foreign forces, in reference to Eritrea, which fought alongside the federal Ethiopian Army. By late December 2022, the AU observation mission (AU-MVCM) had been agreed upon and launched. Eritrea gradually withdrew from most cities in Tigray and by February 2023 its forces had practically abandoned the region and only some minor units remained in strategic positions in border areas, according to TPLF lead negotiator Getachew Reda. This withdrawal occurred as the political and military authorities of Tigray were handing over heavy weapons in the presence of the AU mission. Between December 2022 and January 2023, humanitarian access to the region improved significantly, according to United Nations sources. Communications and commercial flights were reestablished. On 3 February, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with TPLF leaders for the first time since 2020. The TPLF established a committee to form a transitional government and in early March Tigray leaders agreed at a conference on the composition of this transitional government, called the Interim Regional Administration (IRA), though it was boycotted by three Tigray opposition parties that accused the TPLF of monopolising power. On 17 March, the TPLF chose former minister Getachew Reda to preside over the IRA. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ratified his appointment. Days later, the federal Parliament removed the TPLF from the list of terrorist groups and the federal government dropped the charges against its political and military leaders, an essential requirement for forming the IRA. Getachew Reda appointed the members of the IRA on 5 April.

In late July 2023, the chief commander of Tigray, Tadesse Worede, announced the demobilisation of 50,000 TPLF militiamen and urged the federal government to guarantee the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces, though this had not yet been completed effectively by the end of the year. In September, acting President Getachew Reda said that the federal government had agreed to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration in the disputed areas of Western and Southern Tigray despite ongoing unrest in the Amhara region, partly motivated by fear that the government would return the disputed territories to Tigray, which are currently under partial control of the Amhara regional authorities. In August, the federal defence minister had announced government plans to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration in these areas. Disputed between the Tigray and Amhara regions, these areas suffered from ethnic cleansing committed by the Fano militias during the 2020-2022 war, which have been designated crimes against humanity. A year after the cessation of hostilities agreement was signed, the status of the two regions and the Tigrayan

population displaced from them remained in limbo. In June, Human Rights Watch reported persistent serious human rights violations and acts of ethnic cleansing by the Fano militias. Finally, the AU-MVCM mission was extended until December 2023.

Other decisions and events revealed the fragile development of the process. In March, the WFP and the US suspended the delivery of humanitarian aid to Tigray after discovering a strategy to divert humanitarian aid, a decision that was extended to the rest of Ethiopia in early June, affecting 20 million people, one sixth of the country. In August, the WFP resumed the delivery of humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, the AU International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, which had a UN mandate, published a report in September warning that Eritrean troops and the Fano militias continued to commit serious atrocities in Tigray. Specifically, the report stated that despite the ceasefire between the government and the TPLF, Eritrean troops and the Amhara militia remained in the Tigray region and continued to commit atrocities against civilians, including rape and sexual violence against women and girls. Since its initial visit in 2022, the Commission has not been granted access to Ethiopia. Following this report and the denial of access to the Commission, the UN Human Rights Council suspended the Commission's mandate in October, meaning that there is no longer any independent mechanism investigating atrocities in Ethiopia.

Gender, peace and security

Although the 2022 peace agreement included issues relating to gender-based violence committed over the course of the conflict and urged the parties to condemn any acts of sexual violence and gender-based violence, atrocities and acts of sexual violence continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and Fano militias, as detailed by the AU International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, whose mandate was suspended by the Human Rights Council.

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice through the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJ-WGE) and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the UN Women office in Ethiopia organised a high-level national consultation with women from diverse backgrounds to discuss policy options on transitional justice to ensure women's participation in the development of an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy for Ethiopia. The event was held from 9 to 10 June 2023, in Bishoftu, Oromia and was attended by 60 female participants, including members of women-led civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, women's advocacy groups and feminist groups, women influencers, university professors, human rights

defenders, media professionals, service providers for survivors of violence, community representatives and members of UN agencies.

Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan ²⁸	
Negotiating actors	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan
Third parties	AU, WB, UAE, EU and USA
Relevant agreements	Anglo-Egyptian Treaty (1929) and its amended version, the Agreement between the Republic of Sudan and the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria) for the utilisation of the Nile waters (Cairo, 8 November 1959); Nile Basin Initiative that opens the Cooperative Framework Agreement process (1999, signed by seven countries and ratified by four of them, as of December 2023); Cooperative Framework Agreement (Entebbe, 14 May 2010); Khartoum Declaration (also called the Nile Agreement; Khartoum, 23 March 2015)

Summary:

The Nile, the longest river in Africa and the second longest in the world, has been at the centre of disputes for decades. At the heart of the conflict are Egypt and Ethiopia, the two main regional actors. The construction since 2011 of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile, a tributary of the Nile in Ethiopian soil, has exacerbated tensions between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Egypt depends on the Nile for virtually its entire water supply, so its control is strategic. Its main tributary, the Blue Nile, runs from Lake Tana in Ethiopia and joins the White Nile in Sudan, where it provides around 85% of the water of the main Nile. Thirty-two per cent of Ethiopia's territory is located in the Nile basin, where about 40% of Ethiopia's population resides. The Nile runs throughout Sudan from south to north and provides around 77% of the country's fresh water. The agreements of the colonial period, which favoured Egypt and Sudan, ignored the needs of the rest of the coastal countries, including Ethiopia. There have been constant attempts to build a multilateral management framework and in 1999 the 11 countries of the basin created the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), whose objective was to establish a multilateral treaty. Egypt and Sudan participated in the process, but they rejected the agreement. In the last decade, different initiatives have been promoted, such as in 2015, when the three countries signed the GERD Declaration of Principles, though it has yielded no results to date. In 2019, the World Bank promoted meetings with US observers and between 2020 and 2021 it facilitated EU-supported tripartite talks, which stalled. The reservoir then began to get filled, precipitating the escalation of militarised tension. Cairo announced that the GERD posed a threat to its security and warned that a conflict could break out if the UN did not intervene to prevent it. The UAE facilitated peace talks in Abu Dhabi in August 2022, though they were not met with success.

28 See "The Nile basin: cooperation or conflict?" in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

During the year, **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan agreed to resume talks to reach an agreement on the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)**. However, no progress was made in the different rounds of negotiations. In recent years, initiatives have proliferated to ease tension between the three countries, but the tripartite talks facilitated by the AU remained deadlocked since 2021 and the Abu Dhabi initiative of 2022 also failed. The tension escalated again in 2022 when Ethiopia announced that it had unilaterally completed the third phase of filling the reservoir and started hydropower production through the dam's second turbine, which provoked reactions from Sudan and Egypt. The latter threatened Ethiopia that it would take all available action to stop this process and protested Ethiopia's decision before the UN Security Council in February and July 2023, holding Ethiopia responsible for any impact that the situation could have in Egypt. However, after months of impasse, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met on 13 July for the first time since the 2019 Sochi summit. Their meeting came during the Summit of Neighbouring States of Sudan held in Cairo on 12-13 July, aimed at helping to promote peace in relation to the instability affecting Sudan. They issued a joint statement agreeing to restart talks on the GERD to reach a final agreement on filling and managing the dam in four months.²⁹ This agreement came after Ethiopia promised to ensure that Egypt and Sudan would receive sufficient water flow during the fourth annual filling, which could last until September. However, in the four negotiating rounds held since then (27-28 August in Cairo; 23-24 September in Addis Ababa; 23-24 October in Cairo; 17-19 December in Addis Ababa), the parties failed without making progress in the talks. In September, two weeks after the first round, the Ethiopian prime minister announced that he had carried out the fourth and final filling of the reservoir, which Egypt condemned and described as unilateral and illegal.

Somalia	
Negotiating actors	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest), political-military movement Ahlu Sunna Wal-Jama'a, clan leaders and sub-clans, Somaliland
Third parties	UN, IGAD, Türkiye, among others
Relevant agreements	Road map to end the transition (2011), Kampala Accord (2011), Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), Mogadishu Declaration of the National Consultative Forum (2015), Electoral Agreement on Somalia (27 May 2021)

Summary:

The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a

coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. Since 1991, more than 15 peace processes with different types of proposals were attempted to establish a central authority. Of note were the Addis Ababa (1993), Arta (2000) and Mbagathi (2002-2004) processes. The centrality of the Somali state had led to a high degree of authoritarianism during Barre's rule, and the different proposals intended to establish a State that did not hold all of the power, a formula widely rejected by Somali society. However, some clans and warlords rejected the federal or decentralized model because it represented a threat to their power. The resolution of the conflict has been complicated by several issues: the power of some warlords who have turned conflict into a way of life; the issue of representation and the balance of power used to establish the future government between the different stakeholders and clans that make up the Somali social structure in conflict for years during Siad Barre's dictatorship; interference by Ethiopia and Eritrea; and the erratic stance of the international community. The rise of political Islam as a possible governing option through the Islamic courts, and the internationalization of the conflict with the arrival of foreign fighters in the armed wing of the courts, al-Shabaab, as well the Ethiopian invasion and the U.S. role in the fight against terrorism, have all contributed to making the situation more difficult. The Transitional Federal Government, which emerged from the Mbagathi peace process (2004), came to an end in 2012 and gave way to the Federal Government. However, the actions of the federal government and Parliament, marked by their inefficiency and corruption, and their re-election, have been the cause of dispute and successive negotiations between the federated states and opposition groups within the respective states as well as between the different clans that make up the social structure of the country.

There were no contacts between the federal government and the armed group al-Shabaab as the military offensive continued against al-Shabaab and the serious drought and famine continued to have consequences for many parts of the country. The federal government continued to insist on its policy of rapprochement with the member states of the federation and several meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC) were held during the year, a body that brings together the federal government and the member states. Some progress was also made in power sharing within the federation, alongside the strengthening of military operations against al-Shabaab. In January, however, Puntland decided to suspend relations with Mogadishu, announcing that it would operate as an autonomous administration until the interim Constitution was finalised and would only collaborate with Mogadishu on humanitarian issues. At the same time, serious tensions and clashes broke out in South West state in December over the extension of the term of office of regional President Lafta-Gareen. The president of the lower house of the federal Parliament, Adan Madobe, organised a peace conference between the regional president and opposition leaders in Baidoa in January. It was joined by Somali President Hassan Sheikh

²⁹ Joint Statement on Ethiopia – Egypt Relation, “Ethiopia, Egypt agree to finalize GERD filling, rules of operations agreement in four months”, *Addis Standard*, 13 July 2023.

Mohamud and ended on a high note in February with the opposition accepting a one-year extension of the term of regional President Lafta-Gareen and the promise to hold elections in the region in January 2024. In subsequent meetings of the NCC, all member states agreed to extend their respective presidential terms by one year and the upper and lower houses of the federal Parliament pledged to study a constitutional amendment to extend the mandate of the MPs and the president for one year, which the opposition opposed.

Gender, peace and security

The situation in Somalia remained critical and there were setbacks in terms of gender violence and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as explained by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous at the UN Security Council meeting held in February, which revealed a devastating situation. The rise in violence in the country and the current drought, which resulted in forced displacement and food insecurity for the population, exposed the country to a greater risk of famine and exacerbated gender violence. The last famine in Somalia, in 2011, killed one quarter of a million people.

Bahous indicated that the 30% quota for women in elections and government was not met in Somalia, women's representation had decreased, sexual violence had increased and Parliament had not yet passed the sex crimes bill adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers five years before. Instead, opponents of the law pushed for alternative legislation that would legalise child marriage, bypass the age of consent, reduce the types of admissible evidence and eliminate survivors' rights. Bahous said that the Somali women invited to report to the Council of Ministers had warned of this situation, but no appropriate measures were taken. In contrast, rates of sexual violence had increased alarmingly since 2020. They doubled compared to 2019 and continued to rise, as the worst drought in many decades had a devastating impact on all Somalis, with women and girls suffering a disproportionate impact. Impunity remained widespread and armed groups, especially al-Shabaab, continued to kidnap women and girls, force families to give them their daughters to marry and occupy hospitals and maternity wards, while also silencing and threatening individuals that denounced the situation locally. This was the case of the killings of young MP Amina Mohamed Abdi and of Hibaq Abukar, the advisor on women's affairs to the prime minister's office, among other women activists and women who work in local and national politics and civil society.

Somalia-Somaliland

Negotiating actors	Federal government of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland
Third parties	Türkiye, Norway

Relevant agreements

Summary:

The territory of the current self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland received its name when the British Empire took control of the Egyptian administration in 1884. After signing successive treaties with the ruling Somali sultans in the region, it established a protectorate called British Somaliland. In 1960, when the protectorate became independent from Britain, it was called the State of Somaliland. Four days later, on 1 July 1960, Somaliland joined Italian Somalia, forming the State of Somalia. In the mid-1980s, resistance movements supported by Ethiopia emerged throughout the country. Notable among these was the Somali National Movement (SNM), which rose up in Somaliland, leading to the Somaliland War of Independence, which toppled the Siad Barre regime and started the Somali Civil War in 1991, which continues to this day. On 18 May 1991, the northern clans proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Somaliland, comprising the administrative regions of Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool. Somaliland is not internationally recognised, but it has its own Constitution (2001), currency and government, as well as greater political stability than Somalia, helped by the influence of the dominant Isaaq clan (80% of the population). The multiparty elections of 2005 were internationally observed and represented a push for international recognition as a sovereign state, though it remains limited. Somaliland's independence has not been officially recognised by any UN member state or international organisation, ceding leadership to the AU in the decision. The AU has been considering Somaliland's application for membership in the bloc and its approach as an "exceptional case", although the AU itself has expressed fear that formal recognition of Somaliland would encourage other secessionist movements in Africa. Over 15 peace processes have been held in Somalia, including the Somaliland dispute. At the 2012 London International Conference, actors from the international community proposed to hold negotiations to resolve the dispute between Somalia and Somaliland. Since then, six rounds of negotiations have been held (in London, Dubai, Ankara, Djibouti and twice in Istanbul). The seventh (Istanbul III) failed in January 2015 and the process was interrupted. Türkiye has been encouraging attempts at rapprochement between the sides since then.

After Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was inaugurated in May 2022, he said he was willing to help the different federated states to reconcile and, above all, to reopen a political negotiating process that would lead to reconciliation between Somalia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland and its incorporation into the federation. After more than three decades of deadlock and many failed initiatives to bring the parties closer together, the last process had been interrupted in 2015. **In late 2022, international contacts and initiatives were relaunched, culminating in a meeting between both presidents in Djibouti in December 2023.**

In December 2022, a delegation from Türkiye and Norway had met with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and later with Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi to resume talks between Somalia and Somaliland and promote reconciliation between both administrations. President Mohamud told the delegation that he was willing to launch the process. Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi also told the Turkish-Norwegian delegation that he was also willing to launch the process, but added that some conditions had to be met first, primarily the fulfilment of previous agreements and the existence of an international media team. Muse Bihi noted the need to establish an independent secretariat to coordinate mediation efforts. He added that the teams representing each government should clearly set the items on the agenda in the presence of this independent secretariat. The delegation that met with President Mohamud consisted of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Yilmaz, Norwegian Embassy Officer Haakon Svane, Turkish Special Representative Aykut Kumbarolu and Norwegian Special Representative Heidi Johansen.

Later, on 1 April 2023, the president of Somalia appointed the former president of Galmudug state and federal minister of the interior, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, to be the special envoy for Somaliland to “guarantee the unity and solidarity of the Somali people”. On 18 April, Somaliland's President Muse Bihi reciprocated by appointing former Somaliland Minister Edna Adan Ismail as envoy for the talks between Somaliland and Somalia. From June to October, the federal government's special envoy for dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, held a series of consultative meetings with different political and social actors. The different initiatives and exploratory contacts culminated in a meeting between the presidents of Somalia and Somaliland on 28 and 29 December in Djibouti. The Somaliland delegation consisted of President Bihi and Minister of Economic Development Saad Ali Shire, Minister of Planning Ahmed Mohamed Diriye, Minister of the Interior Mohamed Kahin Ahmed and Minister of Education Ahmed Adan Buxane, as well as Somaliland's special envoy for the peace talks, Edna Adan. The Somali delegation was composed of President Mohamud and Minister of the Interior Ahmed Moalim Fiqi, Minister of Commerce Jabril Abdirashid and the special envoy for the negotiations with Somaliland, Abdikarim Hussein Guled. President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti was also present, representing the host country. He has made many attempts to use his good offices and facilitate dialogue between the parties in the last two decades. The parties discussed a wide variety of issues

The agreement between Somaliland and Ethiopia on the recognition of Somaliland's independence in exchange for sea access to Ethiopia set off a serious diplomatic crisis and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland

at the meeting, including debt relief, national project management, resource allocation, crises and recent tensions in the Red Sea, and they agreed to resume peace talks between both administrations.

However, this historic meeting was overshadowed by Ethiopia and Somaliland's announcement on 1 January that they were signing a memorandum of understanding,³⁰ which triggered a serious diplomatic crisis between both administrations and Somalia. This agreement would give landlocked Ethiopia the opportunity to obtain a

permanent naval base and commercial maritime service in the Gulf of Aden by leasing a 20-kilometre stretch of coastline for a period of 50 years, as detailed by the Ethiopian and Somaliland governments. In exchange, according to Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi, Ethiopia would internationally recognise the region as an independent country. Addis Abeba clarified that it still had to evaluate the request and promised “an in-depth evaluation to adopt a position regarding Somaliland's efforts to win official recognition”.³¹ The deal revolves around the port of Berbera, which was recently expanded by UAE-based port logistics company DP World. Ethiopia has historically sought to diversify its access to the sea, as 95% of its trade

is conducted through Djibouti. The deal also included leasing land in Somaliland to build a naval base. In exchange, Somaliland would receive the equivalent value of shares in Ethiopian Airlines. In a statement made public on X (formerly Twitter), the Ethiopian Prime Minister's Office welcomed the agreement but made no mention of recognition of Somaliland's independence, only a commitment to advance mutual interests on the basis of reciprocity. This announcement triggered a new diplomatic crisis between Somalia, Somaliland and Ethiopia that took on regional dimensions due to the regional alliances of Ethiopia and Somalia.

Somalia declared the agreement void and even threatened Ethiopia with war if necessary to preserve its national sovereignty, as Somalia continues to view Somaliland as part of Somalia, despite its de facto independence in 1991, which lacks international recognition. Demonstrations were called in Somalia and in Somaliland itself the agreement was met with protests and the resignation of the defence minister. The US, EU, AU, IGAD and Arab League called for dialogue and a reduction in tensions. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) urgently convened an extraordinary meeting on 18 January to address diplomatic tensions, but Ethiopia announced that it would not be able to attend due to overlap with another summit. The meeting convened by Djibouti, which holds

30 Ali, Faisal, “Ethiopia and Somaliland reach agreement over access to ports”, *The Guardian*, 1 January 2024.

31 Ehl, David, “Polémico acuerdo: salida al mar a cambio de reconocimiento”, *DW*, 4 January 2024.

the rotating presidency of the IGAD, coincided with the 19th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). According to various analysts,³² even though a confrontation between both countries is unlikely due to Ethiopia's greater military power, the agreement could seriously damage relations between them. It could also have consequences in the war against the Somali Islamist group al-Shabaab, since Somalia's criticism of Ethiopia could lead to pressure on the Ethiopian troops in the AU mission in the country (ATMIS) and end with their withdrawal. Ethiopia is one of the main troop-contributing countries to the AU mission in Somalia.

Gender, peace and security

The delegation that met with President Mohamud in December 2022 consisted of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Yilmaz, Norwegian Embassy Officer Haakon Svane, Turkish Special Representative Aykut Kumbarolu and Norwegian Special Representative Heidi Johansen. The appointment of Somaliland's former Minister of Health and Foreign Affairs Edna Adan as Somaliland's envoy to the process may boost it significantly. Edna Adan was the wife of Prime Minister Mohamed Ibrahim Egal during the Siad Barre regime. Egal was later the president of Somaliland between 1993 and 2002. Edna Adan is considered a symbol in the fight for women's rights in Somalia and she has been the president of the UNPO, the organisation of stateless nations of the world, since 2022. Edna Adan has received many awards, including the Templeton Prize in June 2023 for her work in peacebuilding and her fight against female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa out of the hospital that bears her name in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland. This prize highlighted the traditional role of Somali women's organisations in promoting peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives in attempts to overcome the divisions in the conflict in Somalia.

Maghreb – North Africa

Libya	
Negotiating actors	Government of National Unity (GNU), Government of National Stability (GNS), Presidential Council, High State Council (HSC), House of Representatives (HoR), LNA/ALAF
Third parties	UN; Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Türkiye, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia (Berlin Process)
Relevant agreements	Libyan Political Agreement or Skhirat Agreement (2015), Ceasefire agreement (2020)

Summary:

After the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, Libya has experienced a transition process characterized by multiple political, economic, social, institutional and security challenges and by the presence of numerous armed groups and the intervention and projection of the interests of different foreign actors. Since 2014, the North African country has been the scene of increasing violence and political instability, which led to the formation of two major poles of power and authority. Given the developments in the country, mediation efforts led by the UN have tried to find a solution to the crisis. Negotiations have confronted several obstacles due to disputes of legitimacy, the diversity of actors involved, multiple interests at stake and the persistent climate of violence in the country, among other factors. In late 2015, the Libyan Political Agreement or the Skhirat Agreement was signed under the auspices of the UN amidst a climate of persistent divisions and scepticism due to the foreseeable problems in implementing it. In October 2017, the United Nations submitted a new plan to start the political transition and facilitate implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement. As part of the Berlin Process (which began in 2019 with the participation of a dozen countries, in addition to the UN, the Arab League, the EU and the AU), intra Libyan negotiations were launched around three components in 2020: security issues (the responsibility of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission), political affairs (managed by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, or LPDF) and economic aspects. An International Monitoring Committee was also activated. In late 2020, a permanent ceasefire agreement was made official, and a roadmap was announced that led to the formation of a unity government and provided for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in December 2021. The elections were not held in a context of divisions and power struggles that led to the reformation of two parallel governments, opening a new stage of uncertainty in the country.

Negotiations involving different local and international actors continued during 2023, but no definitive political agreement was achieved for holding elections in the country, which were initially scheduled for December 2021. Therefore, the impasse persisted and in early 2022 it had led to the configuration of two rival governments, one based in Tripoli (the Government of National Unity (GNU), recognised by the UN and headed by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibeh) and another established in eastern Libya (the Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha (until March) and then by Osama Hamad) and aligned with the House of Representatives (Tobruk) and General Khalifa Haftar's LNA (or ALAF) armed group. The prolonged political deadlock continued to contribute to economic and security instability in Libya, though the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and low-intensity levels of violence generally remained in force throughout the year. The fragility of the situation in the North African country was also exposed in 2023 by the disastrous consequences of Storm Daniel, which in September led to the destruction of two dams and the death and disappearance of thousands of people in Derna (east).

32 Weldemariam, Alemayehu, "Ethiopia's deal with Somaliland upends regional dynamics, 'risking strife across the Horn of Africa'", *The Conversation*, 13 January 2024.

At the beginning of the year, the UN special representative in Libya and head of the mission in the country (UNSMIL), Abdoulaye Bathily, focused his efforts on supporting the design of a new road map so that elections could be held in late 2023. In February, he announced his intention to establish a high-level panel for the elections, made up of politicians, tribal leaders, security actors and representatives of civil society, youth and women. This panel would be in charge of facilitating the adoption of the legal framework and the date for the vote. Meanwhile, the legislative bodies of the two rival governments were involved in talks promoted by the UN in 2022 to try to outline the constitutional framework for the elections. Thus, reforms to the 2011 Constitutional Declaration were approved to define the roles of the president, prime minister and Parliament, the subject of some criticism from Bathily and other observers for not resolving some controversial issues, and a road map of its own was announced for the elections. In early March, the two legislative bodies, the House of Representatives and the High Council of State (established as an advisory body, but which performs legislative functions of the GNU) announced the formation of a 6+6 Joint Committee to draft the electoral laws. Bathily acknowledged that this body was primarily responsible for defining the rules for the elections and that the panel he had proposed could play an auxiliary role.

In June, after several days of meetings in Morocco, the 6+6 Committee, made up of six representatives from each legislative body, announced that it had reached an agreement on the electoral laws. However, several political factions raised objections and demanded a revision of the text. The 6+6 Commission presented a revised version, which was approved by the House of Representatives in October, but not by the High Council of State, which had approved the previous version and rejected the changes that allowed members of the military to run for office. UNSMIL conducted a “technical review” of the electoral laws and identified a number of provisions that were amended, but several controversial issues of a more political nature remained unresolved. Until the end of the year, dissent persisted regarding the mandatory nature of a second round in the presidential election despite the fact that one of the candidates got more than 50% of the votes, the parliamentary elections would be held depending on the success of the presidential election, there were guarantees of a more inclusive process with other Libyan actors (including women) and an interim unity government in charge of organising the elections would be formed. This last point remained the most controversial. The UN had initially been reluctant to the idea of a new unity government, believing that it could discourage the parties from fulfilling their electoral commitments and reinforce the status quo. Libyan

The disagreements between some of the dominant political actors in Libya prevented the presidential and parliamentary elections from being held for another year

groups and Western governments were also in favour of holding the vote first and forming a new government later. However, in August, in what analysts described as a change of position, Bathily defended the approach of the 6+6 Committee before the UN Security Council and argued that a unified government, agreed upon by the main actors, was essential to hold elections in the country. The United States, which had also expressed scepticism about the configuration of a new government in Libya, was also willing to support a technocratic executive with the sole task of organising the elections. Some analysts then said that although it was not an ideal option, it was the most realistic way to reunify the country and argued that the UN was not in a position to impose a different solution.

In November, Bathily formally invited representatives of five institutions (the Presidential Council, the House of Representatives, the High Council of State, the Government of National Unity and the LNA) to try to reactivate the dialogue and reach a consensus on the political process. The initiative was supported by various international actors, including the governments of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, which issued a joint statement appealing to the parties to take advantage of the opportunity to build long-term stability for Libya. The UN special envoy asked each of these Libyan actors to designate three representatives to participate in a preparatory meeting to define the terms and agenda of the main meeting. The various actors did not reject the invitation, but they did raise some conditions. For example, Khalifa Haftar demanded the inclusion of the designated government in the east of the country or, alternatively, the exclusion of both governments. The House of Representatives also complained that the Government of National Stability (GNS), not officially recognised by the UN or by any government, was not invited to this meeting and rejected the participation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Meanwhile, Dbeibah, the GNU prime minister, agreed to discuss issues related to electoral laws, but declined any discussion regarding a new government. Given this scenario, at the end of the year the UN special representative warned that the main actors needed to make a political commitment to avoid a new drift of violence in the country. Bathily also said that in his meetings with other actors in Libyan society to try to ensure a more inclusive process, he had noted the clamour for elections as soon as possible and extreme fatigue and disappointment with some political actors’ delaying tactics. Aware of the importance of regional and international support to promote the political process in Libya, the UN special representative made trips and maintained contacts with various actors throughout 2023, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Qatar, Türkiye, the UAE, China, Russia and the EU.

The security work of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission continued throughout the year, which held meetings in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. This mechanism, which Bathily described as a “key UNSMIL ally committed to Libyan unity”, examined the implementation and provisions of the ceasefire agreement, such as the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from the country, which was compromised by the political impasse and the deterioration of the situation in the Sahel and the Sudan. Nevertheless, some security-related initiatives were reported in 2023, such as the joint work of Libyan and international ceasefire monitors in Sirte; the meetings called to address the security challenges of future elections; preliminary talks on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration issues; and the establishment of coordination mechanisms between Libya, Sudan and Niger to facilitate the complete withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. The mercenary withdrawal mechanisms were officially launched in March alongside a meeting of the Security Working Group of the Berlin Process International Follow-up Committee on Libya. This committee remained the main framework for the involvement of international actors in the Libyan negotiating process, with different working groups: the security group, co-led by France, Italy, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the AU; the political group, co-led by the UN, Algeria, Germany and the Arab League; the IHL and human rights group, co-led by the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UN; and the economic group, co-led by Egypt, the US, the EU and the UN.

In August, an economic agreement was announced for the reunification of the Central Bank and the activation of technical committees to implement the process. There were also calls for rival governments to commit to a unified and transparent response after the tragedy caused by Storm Daniel amidst the launch of parallel initiatives and struggles for control of reconstruction funds. During 2023, initiatives were also reported to foster a reconciliation process in the country, promoted by the Libyan Presidential Council with the support of the African Union. In July, a meeting of the preparatory committee was held in Brazzaville (Congo).

Gender, peace and security

One of the main topics during the year was women’s participation in the political and electoral process. In consultations with the UN special representative, various Libyan groups, including women, aspired to a more inclusive process and were frustrated by the persistent deadlock. In this context, the high-level panel for elections organised a regional conference in Tripoli in May on strengthening women’s participation in elections, attended by representatives from 12 Arab countries. Speakers at the conference stressed the need to guarantee the inclusion of women in all phases of

the elections. Preliminary results were also released from a platform called eMonitorplus that monitors violence against women in electoral contexts. **Women’s groups from the different regions of Libya maintained contacts with political actors and members of the 6+6 committee to express their hope that electoral rules would guarantee significant representation of women in the future National Assembly.** Despite these initiatives, the electoral laws approved in the second half of the year established a quota of only six seats for women in the Senate out of a total of 90 (6.6%), a percentage very far from the 20% defined in the constitutional reform.

Also in 2023, UNSMIL and different UN agencies continued to support training and capacity-building initiatives on electoral issues with a gender perspective (50 women from all regions of Libya, in September); leadership, decision-making and communication skills (a one-year programme involving 30 young Libyan women); governance; and responses to sexual violence. Restrictive and discriminatory regulations for women were also denounced, such as the one in April that approved procedures against women who travel without male companions in the western part of the country.

Morocco – Western Sahara	
Negotiating actors	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)
Third parties	UN, Algeria and Mauritania, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire agreement (1991)
Summary:	The attempts to mediate and find a negotiated solution to the Western Sahara conflict led to a cease-fire agreement in 1991. Since then, and despite the existence of a formal negotiations framework under the auspices of the UN, the Western Sahara peace process has failed. The successive proposals and the many rounds of negotiations has not lead to an agreement between the parties, all of which maintain their red lines: Morocco insists on its territorial claims and is only willing to accept a status of autonomy, whereas the POLISARIO Front claims there is a need to hold a referendum that includes the option of independence. Negotiations on Western Sahara –recognised as a territory which is yet to be decolonised- have been determined by the large asymmetry between the actors in dispute, the inability of the UN to set up a consultation on the future of this territory, and regional rivalry between Morocco and Algeria –a key support for the POLISARIO front– and by the support given to Rabat by some key international actors, such as the USA or France. This, in real terms, has meant a prevalence of the Moroccan thesis when approaching the conflict. In late 2020, following incidents with Morocco in the area of Guerguerat, the POLISARIO Front terminated the ceasefire agreement.

Throughout 2023, **the search for a political solution to the Western Sahara issue continued to revolve mainly**

around the diplomatic activity of the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy, Staffan de Mistura, though his efforts failed to reactivate the negotiations. De Mistura's attempts to encourage the resumption of dialogue took place in a context in which low-intensity hostilities persisted between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front after the 1991 ceasefire was broken, although with lower levels of violence compared to 2022, and the regional tension between Morocco and Algeria.

In line with the strategy observed the previous year, the UN special envoy held a series of meetings and contacts with various actors. Between 27 and 30 March, he summoned representatives from Morocco, the POLISARIO Front, Algeria, Mauritania and the countries that make up the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (the US, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Russia) to a series of informal meetings at the United Nations headquarters in New York. During these meetings, the UN representative insisted on the approach, explicit in UNSC Resolution 2654 of October 2022, that calls on all parties involved to expand on their previous positions to facilitate a solution. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss lessons learned from the political process, examine each other's positions in depth and explore mutually acceptable formulas. De Mistura also made a series of visits to the region in which he met with authorities and diplomatic representatives of various countries, like the foreign minister of Morocco in Rabat, the foreign minister of Algeria in Algiers and the president of Mauritania in Nouakchott in September. That same month, he met with the top leader of the POLISARIO Front, Brahim Ghali, in New York. Throughout the year, the UN special envoy also addressed the issue of Western Sahara in meetings with senior officials from Belgium, the UAE, the US, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and EU diplomats.

In one of the most significant events of 2023, **the UN special envoy visited the Moroccan-controlled territory of Western Sahara for the first time.** Two years after his appointment to the position, De Mistura travelled to Laayoune and Dakhla in early September and met with various actors. Until that date, the diplomat had refused to accept the conditions of access imposed by Morocco, which did not allow him to meet with certain groups in society, including women's organisations. During his visit, De Mistura held meetings with Moroccan officials and locally elected representatives in favour of Rabat's autonomy policies and proposals. He also met with civil society organisations, journalists and Sahrawi activists such as Aminetou Haidar, Hamd Hammad, Ali Salem Tamek and El Mami Amar Salem, who complained that the Sahrawi population does not enjoy the same rights

as the Moroccan population and warned of human rights violations, the situation of political prisoners and arrests of people critical of Morocco. They also requested independent mechanisms to monitor respect for human rights and access for journalists and observers.³³ In Dakhla, De Mistura participated in an activity organised by the Moroccan authorities that was also attended by consular delegates from various countries that have recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and have opened diplomatic delegations in the territory. The UN stressed that this meeting should not be interpreted as a precedent or as a position taken by the organisation on the consular delegations established in Dakhla and Laayoune.

The different actors' positions remained mostly unchanged. Morocco insisted that the autonomy proposal it presented almost two decades ago, in 2007, is the only viable result of the political process. Rabat assumes that the specific characteristics of the autonomy proposal would be defined as part of the negotiations, recognises that other actors would like to propose other starting points for the negotiations and argues that the best way to reactivate the talks is with a round table format, such as the round table talks held with the previous UN special envoy, Horst Kohler. Meanwhile, the POLISARIO Front repeated that the self-determination of the Sahrawi people must be the basis for any discussion. In his meeting with De Mistura in New York, Ghali stressed the need for a process of decolonisation of the territory and gave the special envoy a document that sets out the bases for relaunching the peace process under UN leadership. He also said that the POLISARIO Front should be Morocco's main counterpart in any peace process. Algeria, the main supporter of the POLISARIO Front, expressed itself along similar lines, saying that its role is that of an observer. Algiers once again rejected any reactivation of the round table format, claiming that its involvement in the same mechanism of dialogue in 2018 and 2019 had been "instrumentalised". Mauritania maintained its declared role of "positive neutrality". In his annual report on Western Sahara, the UN Secretary-General repeated the need to reestablish the ceasefire, to address a conflict that has lasted almost five decades and get the parties to abandon preconditions to engage in a negotiating process.

Meanwhile, Rabat continued its policy of seeking international recognition of its de facto rule over Western Sahara. Following the "normalisation" agreement announced in December 2022, in July 2023 Israel recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the territory and declared its intention to open a consulate in Dakhla. Ghali participated in the BRICS-Africa summit in

The UN envoy made his first visit to Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara after Rabat withdrew objections to his meetings with civil society actors, including women's groups

33 Muñoz, Miguel, "La visita de la ONU al Sáhara Occidental y el papel de EEUU reavivan la vía política para solucionar el conflicto", *Público*, 8 September 2023.

South Africa, which issued a statement on the need for a “mutually acceptable solution” to the conflict in Western Sahara. In January 2023, the POLISARIO Front held elections to renew its leadership, in which Brahim Ghali was re-elected with 69% of the votes. Bashir Mustafa Sayyed also participated in the elections as an alternative candidate, with a proposal that sought to intensify the military confrontation with Morocco. Analysts said that the vote had shown internal disputes within the organisation about the strategy to follow and the influence of some groups that advocate a more aggressive military path and diplomatic commitment, a position with special support from young people frustrated with the deadlock in the situation.³⁴

Some pointed out the main obstacles for resuming negotiations on Western Sahara, including the gulf in the parties’ positions, the lack of a firm mandate from the UN special envoy in a context in which the UN Security Council faces deep divisions and the lack of international interest in the dispute. De Mistura has also come under criticism for maintaining a low-profile approach. In this scenario, some identified the US as the country best placed to give a boost to the UN-led diplomatic process, considering the relative deterioration of relations between Morocco and France due to the rapprochement between Paris and Algiers; the change in Spain’s position, which aligned itself with Rabat’s proposal in 2022; and Russia’s close relationship with Algeria and the POLISARIO Front. Washington exerted greater diplomatic effort in this area in 2023, which raised some expectations about reactivating the political track. According to reports, in April, practically at the same time as the bilateral meetings with the UN special envoy, US officials told the representatives of Morocco, the POLISARIO Front and Algeria that it was time to reactivate the process. Support for De Mistura’s efforts was also emphasised in conversations between Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and the Moroccan foreign minister in May and between Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and the foreign minister of Algeria in June. In September and December, Undersecretary of State for North African Affairs Joshua Harris travelled to Morocco and Algeria and met Ghali in Tindouf in September. The Trump administration recognised Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020 and the Biden administration has not revoked the motion. According to some sources, the US could use this against Algeria, given its closer ties with Russia.³⁵ Despite this activity, some analysts think that Washington is not willing to dedicate significant political capital to the issue of Western Sahara, which is not among its priorities. **Looking to the future, new questions were anticipated, such as the possible impact of the war in Gaza** and its repercussions on the entire region and on international priorities, as well as the effects of Algeria’s presence in the new UN Security

Council as a member state elected in January 2024 for a period of two years.

Gender, peace and security

The UN Secretary-General’s personal envoy paid a visit to Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara in September 2023 after Rabat withdrew its objections to his meetings with civil society actors, including women’s groups. De Mistura had previously refused to travel to the area because he was forbidden from meeting with these actors, in line with the principles of the UN and consistent with the commitments made to women’s participation in promoting peace and security, an implicit allusion to the women, peace and security agenda. The UN mission in the territory, MINURSO, also reported that the mission team was made up of 51 women (23% of the total), a drop from 33% in 2022, though above the 19% defined as the target in the UN mission parity strategy for the period 2018-28.

Southern Africa

Mozambique	
Negotiating actors	Government, RENAMO, RENAMO military junta
Third parties	AU, National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Relevant agreements	Rome peace agreement (1992), Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2019)

Summary:

The coup d’état against the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the guerrilla warfare carried out by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) Marxist-Leninist insurgency took Mozambique to Independence in 1975. Since then, the country has been affected by a civil war between the FRELIMO Government and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) armed group, supported by the white minorities that governed in the former Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) and South Africa during the apartheid, in the context of the Cold War. In 1992 the parties reached a peace agreement that was considered an example of reconciliation. This was mediated by the Community of Sant’Egidio and ended a 16-year long war that caused one million fatalities and five million displaced persons, and gave way to a period of political stability and economic development, albeit high levels of inequality. In parallel, growing accusations of fraud and irregularities in the electoral processes that followed, some of which were confirmed by international observers, have gone hand-in-hand with a growing authoritarianism and repression of the opposition, and FRELIMO taking over the State (and the communication media and economy). In 2013, RENAMO conditioned its continuation in political life to a series of changes, mainly the reform of the national

34 Fabiani, Riccardo, “Paving the Way to Talks on Western Sahara”, *International Crisis Group*, Commentary / Middle East & North Africa, 20 July 2023.
 35 The New Arab, “US diplomat in Morocco for Western Sahara autonomy talks after Algeria visit”, *The New Arab*, 18 December 2023.

electoral commission and an equitable distribution of the country's wealth. It threatened to remove its signature from the 1992 peace agreement, and indeed this did happen, throwing the country back into armed fighting in 2013 and the subsequent launch of a new agreed peace negotiation process in August 2014. RENAMO's declaration of a truce in 2016 and the progress made in the peace process during 2017 caused a notable drop in armed actions, achieving the signing of a new peace agreement in August 2019, though sporadic clashes persist with the dissident faction of RENAMO calling itself the RENAMO Military Junta.

The Mozambican National Resistance's (RENAMO) disarmament and demobilisation process provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed in 2023.

On 15 June, the process was formally completed with the disarmament and demobilisation of the last group of 347 former RENAMO combatants, including 100 women. The group's last military base and headquarters in Vunduzi, Sofala province, were also closed. In total, since the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process had begun in 2019, 5,221 RENAMO ex-combatants were demobilised and its 16 military bases were closed. At the ceremony, attended by Mozambican President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi and RENAMO leader Ossufo Momade, Nyusi expressed hope that the closure of the last military base would end a bloody chapter that has mainly affected the central provinces of Mozambique. Nyusi also pledged to continue with the DDR process, the next step of which will be focused on the reintegration of former combatants into Mozambican society.

AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat issued a statement congratulating the country and saying that the final closure of the last RENAMO base made an "important contribution to silencing the guns in Africa". Mirko Manzoni, the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for Mozambique and chair of the Contact Group for Mozambique peace talks, praised Mozambique's DDR process for its "people-centred approach" and commended the country for demonstrating how to forge and promote peace.³⁶

This step definitively closes the implementation of the Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation (Maputo Accord) signed in 2019 between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO, which emerged to end the armed conflict that had restarted in the country in 2012.

Gender, peace and security

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of 5,221 RENAMO combatants concluded with the demobilisation of a total of 257 women and 4,964 men, as agreed in the peace agreement, according to Peace Process Support – The Secretariat (PPS), whose staff

is 50% female, with 63% of them occupying senior positions. According to PPS data, 63 female DDR beneficiaries were linked to reintegration opportunities (24% of the total number of women) and another 41 women and family members were integrated into the police forces as part of the combatant reintegration process. Demobilisation activities were carried out in accommodation centres designed to include gender-sensitive services, including separate accommodation and hygiene facilities for women.³⁷

West Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)

Negotiating actors	Government of Cameroon; four interim governments (IGs) proclaiming themselves representative of the people of Ambazonia: IG Sisiku (Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, first President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and Vice President Dabney Yerima); the other three IGs are derived from IG Sisiku, each created after the previous IG refused to give up power: IG Sako (Samuel Sako); IG Marianta (Iya Marianta Njomia); IG Chris Anu (ally of Leke Olivier Fongunueh's Red Dragons armed group). The Ambazonia Governing Council coalition (AGovC, led by Cho Ayaba, armed wing Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF). Other political, military and social movements, and religious groups: Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), which includes APLM/SOCADEF, FSCW, MoRISC, SCARM, SCAPO, SCNC (North America faction) and RoAN. Southern Cameroons Stakeholder Platform (SCSP), which includes political movements, civil society, armed groups, religious groups: IG Sisiku, SCNC (except the North America faction), Consortium, Global Takumbeng, SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, SCCOP, AIPC, AYC, SCYC, SCAAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, Reach Out, prisoners organisations, displaced population and refugee organisations, traditional leaders and others.
Third parties	Church, civil society organisations, USIP, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN), Vatican, Canada
Relevant agreements	Buea Declaration (1993, AAC1), ACC2 Declaration (1994), National Dialogue (30th September-4th October, 2019)

Summary:
After Germany's defeat in the First World War, Cameroon came under the mandate of the League of Nations and was divided between French Cameroon and British Cameroon. In 1961, the two territories that made up British Cameroon held a referendum limiting their self-determination to union with the already independent Republic of Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon) or union with Nigeria. The southern part of British Cameroon (a region currently corresponding to the

36 United Nations, "Declaração do Enviado Pessoal do Secretário-Geral das Nações Unidas para Moçambique", 6 August 2023.

37 Secretariado para o Processo da paz, "Integração da dimensão de género", undated.

provinces of North West and South West) decided to join the Republic of Cameroon, whereas the north preferred to join Nigeria. A poorly conducted re-unification in the 1960s based on centralisation and assimilation has led the English-speaking minority of what was once southern British Cameroon (20% of the country's population) to feel politically and economically marginalised by state institutions, which are controlled by the French-speaking majority. These movements demand a return to the federal model that existed between 1961 and 1972. In 1972, a referendum was held in which a new Constitution was adopted that replaced the federal state with a unitary one and granted more powers to the president, so the southern part of British Cameroon (known as Southern Cameroons) lost its autonomy and was transformed into the two current provinces of North West and South West. In 1993, representatives of the English-speaking groups held the All Anglophone Conference (AAC1) in Buea, which resulted in the Buea Declaration (which demanded constitutional amendments to restore the federation of 1961). The AAC2 was held in Bamenda in 1994, which concluded that if the federal state were not restored, Southern Cameroons would declare independence. Begun over sectoral issues in 2016, the conflict worsened in late 2017, with the declaration of independence on 1 October 2017 and the subsequent government repression to quell the secessionist movement, there was an escalation of insurgent activity. Attempts at negotiation have been affected by divisions in the government and by the complexity and fragmentation of the secessionist movement, whose political leaders are imprisoned, such as the first president of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, as well as in the diaspora, which reduces its influence on armed groups on the ground. Meanwhile, the proliferation of armed groups, which in some cases do not respond to political leadership, makes resolving the conflict even more difficult. None of the initiatives to date, notably the All Anglophone Conference (AAC3) pending since 2018, the HD-facilitated Swiss track³⁸ that began in 2019 and the Grand National Dialogue promoted by Paul Biya's government in 2019 have achieved substantive progress. In 2022, Cameroon certified the completion of the Swiss track and contacts began with Canadian facilitation.

Secret contacts between representatives of the Cameroonian government and various English-speaking separatist groups, facilitated by Canada between October and December 2022 as part of a new initiative to promote a peace process, were confirmed and crystallised on 20 January 2023. The confirmation came with Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly's announcement that **Canada had a mandate to facilitate peace talks between the warring parties in Cameroon**. On 21 January, the separatist movement expressed its commitment to the process facilitated by Canada and many religious, civil society and women's organisation leaders in English-speaking regions hailed the announcement. However, three days after the announcement, **the government of Cameroon denied that it had asked a "foreign party" to mediate**

any resolution to the conflict. This denial revealed deep divisions among senior Cameroonian officials and came as a surprise, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) in February,³⁹ given Yaoundé's participation in previous Canadian-led talks. The rejection dealt a heavy blow to the peacebuilding efforts that Ottawa had led in the previous months. Described as previous secret talks, these contacts had apparently helped both sides to overcome key hurdles to starting a formal dialogue. Shortly after Joly's announcement, Anglophone leaders issued a joint statement affirming their commitment to participating in the negotiations with Canadian facilitation. Since then, there has been no progress. According to the ICG, building on previous Swiss facilitation efforts, Canada had managed to bring together various separatist groups that had expressed their willingness to participate in the negotiations. In the past, separatist groups had remained divided and unable to reach a consensus among themselves. This time, their unity offered the Cameroonian government a counterpart in the negotiations. In March, the five main separatist movements (SOCADEF, AGovC, IG, ACT and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, also known as the Consortium) announced they were holding the All Ambazonia Conference (AAC) in July, also known as the Southern Cameroons People's Conference (SCPC) 2023,⁴⁰ with the aim of unifying the positions of the separatist movement. The first meeting held in Canada from 5-8 October 2023 with groups and community representatives including delegates from Cameroon; groups in the SCSP were joined by other groups such as SCAPO, T-SISC, women's groups from Cameroon, Southern Cameroonian communities from Germany, Switzerland, Canada, South Africa, USA and UAE. Resolutions were taken, one of which was to create a secretariat, SCPS (Southern Cameroons People's Secretariat). The political and military group IG Chris Anu opened an office in Washington on 11 December after hiring a US company to exert pressure in support of the referendum in September.

Gender, peace and security

Cameroonian civil society, and especially women's civil society organisations, remained active. Following Canada's announcement, they hailed the initiative as a great opportunity to resolve the conflict. The Cameroonian women's organisations have worked tirelessly in recent years to build avenues of dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation, leading the German Africa Foundation (DAS)⁴¹ to award the German Africa Prize 2023 to the umbrella of 80 organisations of women mediators and activists that organised the 1st

38 The Swiss track was an initiative promoted by Switzerland with the support and facilitation of the organisation HD. Established in 2019, its activities were certified as finalised by the government of Cameroon in 2022. It had the support of the Friends of the Swiss Contact Group (European Union, United States, Canada, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom).

39 International Crisis Group, "Canada Initiative Offers Opportunity for Cameroon Peace Process", *International Crisis Group*, 9 February 2023.

40 Southern Cameroons People's Conference 2023, accessible at <https://www.scpconference.com/>.

41 DAS press release, "German Africa Award 2023 goes to the Cameroonian women's peace platform '1st National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon'", *DAS*, 30 November 2023.

National Convention of Women for Peace in Cameroon in 2021,⁴² which brought together more than 1,500 female civil society representatives working for peace in the country. This foundation is supported by all political parties in the Bundestag and promotes the implementation of the Federal Government of Germany's African policy and relations between the government and Africa. Another German foundation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, held a round table talk in December to discuss the role of Cameroonian women in peacebuilding that involved representatives of the 1st National Convention of 2021 after the prize was awarded.

Mali	
Negotiating actors	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) that brings together Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) –MNLA, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA
Third parties	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, civil society organisations, Mauritania, Carter Center (Independent Observer of the Peace Agreement)
Relevant agreements	Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2015)

Summary:

The armed conflict affecting Mali since early 2012 resulted in an institutional crisis –which materialized in a military coup– and Tuareg and jihadist groups progressively taking control of the northern part of the country. Since the conflict started, several international actors, including ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, have promoted initiatives leading to re-establishing the constitutional order and recovering Mali's territorial integrity. In parallel with the militarist approaches to face the crisis, exploratory contacts were held with some armed groups (MNLA and Ansar Dine) to find a negotiated way out of the crisis. Despite the announcement of a commitment to the cessation of hostilities from these insurgent groups, at the start of 2013 an offensive by Ansar Dine precipitated an international military intervention led by France. In May 2014 a new negotiation process was started, led by Algeria, where the Mali Government negotiated on both sides with the two coalitions created by the armed groups: the Coordination of Azawad Movements (groups favourable to a federalist/secessionist formula), and the Platform (groups supporting the Government). In July 2015 the signing of a peace agreement was made possible between the Government, the CMA and the Platform, in Algiers. The jihadist groups were left aside in the negotiation table, which kept alive the hostilities from these groups in the new context of implementing the clauses present in the peace agreement. After the coup d'état in May 2021, the CMA and Platform, which had been rival groups thus far, joined together in the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) coalition.

During the year, the parties that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, the Malian government

and the Arab and Tuareg armed groups organised in the Permanent Strategic Framework coalition (CSP) resumed fighting, jeopardising the peace agreement.

One of the triggers for the resumption of the war between the signatory parties is related to the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA), though tensions between the transitional authorities and the armed movements had begun since the military junta came to power following the coup d'état in May 2021. Thus, the year began with new tensions after the armed groups that had signed the Algiers Agreement pulled out of it in late December 2022. In January, Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop travelled to Algeria and met with his counterpart, Ramtane Lamamra, and Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune to discuss issues related to the peace agreement, rejecting Algeria's proposal to host a meeting between the parties "on neutral ground", as the armed groups had requested. Later, on 1 February, the Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP), which brings together CMA and Platform, groups that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, met with the international mediation mechanism of the agreement (led by Algeria) and warned that they would take action if the government continued to block implementation of the agreement. In March, tensions rose due to the mobilisation of around 400 vehicles belonging to armed groups that had signed the agreement near the town of Anefis, in the Kidal region. This prompted the Malian government to send a letter to Algeria denouncing "flagrant violations" of the peace agreement by the signatory armed groups, particularly the CMA, accusing them of collaborating with jihadist groups. In an effort to restart the peace process, the agreement's international mediation mechanism proposed a meeting between the parties on 24 April, which was again rejected by Bamako. On 27 April, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf visited Bamako and held talks with the interim President Colonel Goïta. They issued a joint statement of commitment to the 2015 agreement. This led to an easing of tensions between the parties, and on 12 May Malian Minister of National Reconciliation Colonel Ismaël Wagué met with representatives of the CMA and Platform in Kidal to restore confidence and resume work of the supervision mechanisms, reiterating the government's commitment to the agreement. However, the reshuffling of the government cabinet carried out by President Goïta on 1 July once again strained the negotiations when he added 13 new ministers into the executive branch, with the signatory groups losing two of the four ministries assigned to them in the peace agreement.

In this atmosphere, the Malian government revoked consent for the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA) and announced its decision to close it down. On 30 June, the UN Security Council agreed to end MINUSMA's mandate, cease its operations, transfer tasks and withdraw personnel by 31 December. On

42. See Cameroon in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2021: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

21 June, the CSP said that the departure of the UN mission “without a credible alternative” would deal a “fatal blow” to the peace agreement. In July, MINUSMA began to turn over its 12 military bases to the Malian government, in accordance with the UN mandate. On 1 August, the CSP warned of “serious imminent risks” associated with the handover to the Malian Army of MINUSMA mission camps in areas controlled by armed groups that had signed the peace agreement. In fact, in the following days, for the first time since the peace agreement was signed, major clashes broke out between the CMA and the Malian Army, aided by members of the Wagner Group (Russia) in several northern regions (Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao). The fighting lasted until the end of the year. This led the CMA to announce that it considered itself “at war” with Bamako on 11 September. The withdrawal of MINUSMA prompted a dispute over control of the bases that the UN mission had been using, leading to different armed clashes between the parties. The most notable fighting was for control of the city of Anefis (Kidal) and the MINUSMA bases in Ber (Timbuktu), Aguelhok, Tessalit and Kidal (Kidal). In November, the Malian Army announced its seizure of the strategic city of Kidal, the base of the CSP, which complained that the Malian Army’s presence in the region violated the peace agreement that grants them control there.

The outbreak of violence caused divisions within the CSP. In late September, the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) announced that it was leaving the coalition due to the bellicose stance of the CMA, claiming that the conflict only benefited jihadist actors. Other CSP members also expressed their commitment to peace. Given the danger faced by the peace agreement in the country, in early October the Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Bamako. Some analysts suggested that the visit could involve talks to identify a new mediator between the parties that could serve as guarantor and achieve and guarantee compliance with the ceasefire. The possibility of delaying MINUSMA’s departure for several months to support the negotiations was also considered, especially since some MINUSMA troops were from Guinea and Chad, countries that maintain friendly relations with Mali. There was also talk about the AU possibly assuming the mandate or assisting in mediation efforts.⁴³ However, in December MINUSMA officially ended its deployment after a decade in the country.

Meanwhile, the Carter Center, which acts as an Independent Observer of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali resulting from the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, did not publish any monitoring report during the year on the progress made in its implementation.

The resumption of armed clashes in northern Mali Armed Forces and the armed groups that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk

Senegal (Casamance)	
Negotiating actors	Government, factions of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)
Third parties	ECOWAS, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC)
Relevant agreements	General Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Senegal and the MFDC (Ziguinchor Agreement) (2004)

Summary:

Casamance is a southern Senegalese region geographically separated from the rest of the country by the Gambia River, which is surrounded by the nation of The Gambia. The Casamance region has a distinct culture and language because it was under Portuguese administration during part of the colonial period. Since 1982, the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) has demanded its independence. Clashes between the Senegalese Armed Forces and the MFDC became most violent during the 1990s, concluding in 2004 with the signing of peace agreements by the MFDC’s top leader, Diamacoune Senghor. Following Senghor’s death in January 2007, the MFDC split into three main armed factions, led by Salif Sadio, César Badiate and Mamadou Niantang Diatta, respectively. Since then, low-intensity fighting has continued between the different factions that do not recognise the agreement reached with the government and are vying to increase their control over the territory. In the meantime, efforts are under way to conduct peace negotiations with these actors to put an end to the violence.

On 14 May, at least 250 pro-independence rebels from the southern region of Casamance, members of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance

(MFDC) faction calling itself the Provisional Committee of the Unified Political and Combatant Wings of the MFDC, led by Cesar Atoute Badiate, handed over their weapons in a ceremony that took place at the movement’s former base in the town of Mangone in the Bignona area, in southern Senegal. Various actors, facilitators of the process, local elected representatives and development organisations participated in the ceremony. Ziguinchor Governor Guédj Diouf announced that the handover ends a negotiating process between the government of Senegal and the MFDC-

Sadio faction that has lasted almost three years and called on the other factions of the MFDC to achieve a definitive peace to the conflict that began in 1982.⁴⁴ Marc Tisani, the European Union’s representative in the country, described the event to hand over the weapons as a “historic and important” one for the stability of the region and promised to continue supporting the country to resolve the conflict that he described as the “oldest

43 International Crisis Group, “Northern Mali: A Conflict with No Victors”, *International Crisis Group*, 13 October 2023

44 Swissinfo, “Entregan las armas al menos 250 rebeldes independentistas del sur de Senegal”, *Swissinfo*, 14 May 2023.

of the continent". This event is related to the peace agreement reached on 4 August 2022 between the MFDC faction and the Senegalese government, signed in the capital of Guinea-Bissau.

In May, **a peace agreement was reportedly signed with another MFDC faction.** The agreement provides for the disarmament of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the reintegration of rebels and action to guarantee the peaceful return of all refugees. In this sense, progress had been made in the return of some of the approximately 60,000 displaced people in 2022, though the conditions of return were being made difficult due to land mines in the region. In 2023, Senegal's National Mine Action

Centre reported that between 49 and 170 hectares of land were mined, predominantly in the Ziguinchor region, documenting at least 453 mine-related civilian injuries and 157 deaths since the start of the conflict.

Meanwhile, in May local media outlets reported the death of Salif Sadio, the leader of Atika, the armed wing of the main faction of the MFDC that remains active. Though no information was provided about the circumstances of his death, Salif had reportedly been ill for years and had lost the ability to walk. However, as on other occasions when his death had been declared, Salif reappeared in August in a video during an interview with an emissary sent by Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló.

3. Peace negotiations in America

- In America there were six negotiations during 2023, 13% of the world total.
- Peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the ELN continued amid significant obstacles, but with notable results, such as a ceasefire agreement and the ELN's commitment to put an end to kidnappings for ransom.
- For the first time in a peace process in Colombia, a woman was named the head of the government's negotiating delegation, with Vera Grabe leading the negotiations with the ELN.
- Alongside the direct talks between the governments of Venezuela and the United States, Caracas and the Unitary Platform reached two important agreements in Barbados in mid-October, facilitated by Norway.
- In Haiti, CARICOM led negotiations between the government and opposition political and social organisations to try to forge a more inclusive transition, organise new elections and address the political and security crisis.
- The presidents of Venezuela and Guyana met directly at the request of CARICOM, CELAC and the government of Brazil to address the escalation of the historical territorial dispute over the Essequibo region.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in America in 2023, both the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each case on both continents throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in America that hosted peace negotiations during 2023.

Table 3.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in America in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Colombia (ELN)	Government, ELN	Guarantor countries (Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, Mexico and Chile); permanent supporters (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, Episcopal Conference of Colombia); supporting countries (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain)
Colombia (EMC)	Government, Estado Mayor Central (EMC)	Permanent supporters (Episcopal Conference of Colombia, World Council of Churches, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia), guarantor countries (Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, Venezuela)
Colombia (FARC)	Government, Comunes	UN Verification Mission in Colombia, International Verification Component (Technical Secretariat of the Notables, University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute)
Haiti	Government, social and political opposition	CARICOM Eminent Persons Group
Venezuela	Government, social and political opposition	Norway, Russia, the Netherlands
Venezuela – Guyana	Venezuela, Guyana	CELAC, CARICOM, Brazil, United Nations, Cuba

3.1 Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

There were six negotiating processes in America in 2023, two more than in the previous year, as a peace process began with the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) in Colombia and talks started between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana. These two new processes joined the four that were already active in 2022. Colombia thus became the scene of three

parallel negotiations, one with the ELN, another related to the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the extinct armed group FARC-EP and the new negotiations with EMC, an armed group that splintered off from the FARC-EP. In Venezuela, talks with the country's political and social opposition were joined by the dialogue initiated with the government of Guyana following the crisis triggered by a referendum on the annexation of the disputed region of Essequibo. Finally, the negotiating process between

Map 3.1. Peace negotiations in America in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in America in 2023

the interim Haitian government and different political parties and social organisations in the country remained active. As such, the peace processes in the Americas represented 13% of all negotiations worldwide.

The **actors** participating in the different peace processes included the **governments** of all the respective countries as one of the negotiating parties involved. Only two peace processes involved the participation of active **armed groups**, the ELN and EMC, both in Colombia. In the talks with EMC, the government's negotiating delegation was headed by Camilo González Posso and the EMC delegation was led by Óscar Ojeda, who replaced the initially appointed Andrey Avendaño. In the process to implement the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, the Colombian government negotiated with the political party Comunes, which emerged from the transformation of the armed group FARC-EP. Two of the negotiations took place between governments and the **political and social opposition**. In Haiti, the negotiations took place between the interim government headed by Ariel Henry and political and social opposition groups in a context of maximum institutional fragility, as no elections have been held in the country since 2016, there are no senators or members of the National Assembly in office, there is no still president since the assassination of Jovenel Moïse in July 2021

and the terms of office of the prime minister, the interim government and many local authorities have expired. In Venezuela, talks between the government and the opposition that began in 2021 continued. Finally, there were also negotiations between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana to respond to the crisis produced by Venezuela's attempted annexation of the disputed region of Essequibo, administered by Guyana.

There were six negotiating processes in America in 2023, two more than in 2023, as a peace process began with the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) in Colombia and talks started between Venezuela and Guyana

Third parties were involved in all the negotiations that took place in the Americas, providing support, facilitation, mediation and other roles. All the negotiations in the Americas were supported by more than one external actor to bring the parties closer together. Most of the actors were international. They sought to achieve rapprochement between the parties and encouraged attempts at dialogue to transform the conflicts in question. This participation came both from governments (Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, Mexico, Chile, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Ireland, Russia and the Netherlands) and from international and regional organisations (the UN, OAS, CELAC and CARICOM). Some of these governments and organisations were involved in more than one process. The most active actors were the governments of Norway (involved in three processes: Colombia (ELN), Colombia (EMC) and Venezuela), Cuba and Brazil (involved in

the negotiations with the ELN and the talks between Venezuela and Guyana), Venezuela (participating in the negotiations with both the ELN and EMC) and the United Nations (which played different roles in the peace process with the ELN, the implementation of the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, the negotiating process with EMC and the talks between Venezuela and Guyana). Third-party involvement took place in different formats, such as by coordinating as guarantor countries (Colombia (ELN) and Colombia (EMC)), supporting countries (Colombia (ELN)), permanent supporting countries (Colombia (EMC)), an international verification component (Colombia (FARC)) and an CARICOM Eminent Persons Group (Haiti).

The **negotiating agendas** were varied, reflecting both the specific characteristics of each process and the type of actors and specific demands of each. In the cases of Colombia (FARC and ELN), the agendas had a continuous nature. The process with the FARC was focused on implementation of all the stipulations included in the 2016 peace agreement and the different rounds of negotiations with the ELN concentrated on the aspects agreed upon in the agenda established in 2022, including the central points of a ceasefire and civil society involvement. These issues were also decisive in separate negotiations with the other active armed group, EMC, which included environmental issues in their negotiating agenda. Such issues have gradually been incorporated into peacebuilding agendas in Colombia. The ceasefire agreements were central to the negotiating processes with both the ELN and EMC. These agreements then led to the establishment of mechanisms to verify compliance. The negotiating processes aimed at resolving internal political crises in Haiti and Venezuela were linked to their respective transitions and notably to elections, considered key to the advancement of said political transitions, as well as to mechanisms and procedures on which the parties had to reach an agreement. The talks between Venezuela and Guyana were focused on establishing confidence-building, communicating and easing tension to address the territorial dispute between both countries after Venezuela held a referendum on annexing the Essequibo region, which is under the sovereignty and administration of Guyana and claimed by Venezuela.

The negotiating processes progressed unevenly in the different scenarios and several of them went through moments of enormous difficulty in terms of their continuity. However, they were all still active at the end of the year despite the obstacles. Though they all remained active at the end of 2023 in Colombia and important progress had been made, major crises broke out during the course of the year that put the previous progress at risk. The negotiating process with the ELN

Third parties were involved in all the negotiations that took place in America, providing support, facilitation, mediation and other roles

Women were involved in most negotiating processes in America and even held positions of leadership

underwent its most trying moment in October as a result of the kidnapping of the father of international football player Luis Díaz, which threatened to derail the process. However, his release redirected the talks and by the end of the year important agreements had been reached in a climate favoured by the ceasefire in force since August. The process with EMC also faced major problems that were also overcome. Although the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC progressed more slowly than expected, mechanisms paralysed during the administration of President Iván Duque were reactivated and new institutions were created to implement the agreement, such as the Final Agreement Implementation Unit. The Haitian negotiating process underwent significant difficulties, as the parties maintained their distant positions. However, there were some attempts to improve mutual understanding, such as the appointment of an CARICOM Eminent Persons Group to try to facilitate dialogue between the government and the opposition. Some progress was made in Venezuela, but the negotiating process experienced several incidences of significant tension and disagreement between the parties. The greatest progress took place with the signing of the Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All in Barbados in October, though the primary elections held by the opposition shortly thereafter sparked a major crisis. At the end of the year, an exchange of prisoners between Venezuela and the United States promoted rapprochement between them and had the potential to facilitate the implementation of the Barbados agreement. Finally, the talks between Venezuela and Guyana de-escalated the crisis and the bellicose rhetoric and the parties agreed to continue the dialogue.

Challenges remained in consolidating women's participation in peace negotiations as part of the **women, peace and security agenda**, although women were involved in most negotiating processes in the Americas and even held positions of leadership. However, the greatest challenge was in forming negotiating agendas with a gender focus and in including issues linked to the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population, as well as the demands of women's organisations. Several women played a significant role in different peace processes. In the negotiations between the government of Colombia and the ELN, a woman was appointed the chief negotiator of a delegation for the first time when Vera Grabe became the head of the government's team. The negotiating delegations of both parties were practically equal, with seven women out of a total of 15 negotiators in the government's team and three out of eight in the ELN's team. Also significant was the appointment of Senator Mirlande Manigat as president of the High Transition Council of Haiti,

tasked with promoting national dialogue and advising the prime minister on promoting and managing the transition in the country. Women were also represented and participated in both parties' delegations in the negotiations between the government of Colombia and EMC. In the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement between Colombia and the FARC, the Special Women's Instance for the for the Implementation of the Gender Based Approach remained active, which was defined by the agreement itself. Some references to the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda established by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 were included in the ceasefire agreement with EMC and the United Nations continued to promote its implementation in both Colombia and Haiti with the active involvement of women's organisations. The participation of LGBTIQ+ organisations was also noted in efforts to involve civil society in the negotiations with the ELN and references were made to the inclusion of diversity in the agreement with EMC.

Finally, alongside the negotiating processes analysed in this chapter, the Colombian government took different approaches to armed groups linked to drug trafficking and paramilitary activity as part of the Total Peace policy, a public peacebuilding policy involving all active armed actors in the country. These groups included the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, the Conquering Self-Defence Forces of the Sierra Nevada, the Shottas and Spartanos in Buenaventura, the Combos of Medellín and the Aburrá Valley and the Mexicanos, Locos Yam and RPS-Cartel del Norte in Quibdó.

3.2 Case study analysis

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

Haiti	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	CARICOM Eminent Persons Group
Relevant agreements	--
Summary:	
<p>In recent years, especially after former President Jean Bertrand Aristide left the country in February 2004 and the subsequent deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH), there have been several attempts at consultation and dialogue between various political and social sectors to cope with the institutional fragility, political-social polarisation and economic and security crisis facing the country. Yet none of these initiatives, most of which agreements or have led to permanent or stable spaces or mechanisms for negotiation. Though President Jovenel Moïse's mandate has been controversial since its inception after he was accused of electoral fraud in the 2015 election, his attempts to create a national dialogue in 2019 came in response to the deepening crisis in mid-2018 and the outbreak of protests and episodes of violence in 2019.</p>	

As part of a serious institutional and security crisis, **CARICOM led negotiations between the interim government of Ariel Henry and a series of political parties and civil society organisations to try to forge a more inclusive transition, organise new elections and deal with the growing deterioration of the security situation.**

According to the United Nations, criminal gangs controlled approximately 80% of the capital (and the remaining 20% potentially suffered from their activity) and the number of homicides doubled compared to last year. In addition, the UN Security Council authorised the deployment of a multinational security support mission (MSS) led by Kenya and renewed the mandate of the BINUH and strengthened its capabilities. At the institutional level, no elections have been held in Haiti since 2016, there are no senators or members of the National Assembly in office, there is no president since the assassination of Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 and the terms of office of the prime minister, the interim government and many of the local authorities have ended. Faced with this situation, in the first few months of the year, the interim government of Ariel Henry tried to deploy the National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections, known as the 21 December Agreement, signed on 21 December 2022 by the government and dozens of political parties and social groups. However, this agreement did not include many other political groups and civil society organisations critical of the government.

In an attempt to begin implementing the aforementioned agreement, the High Transition Council (CST) was created in January. Presided over by senator and former First Lady Mirlande Manigat, who represents the political parties, and including one civil society representative and another representative of the private sector, the High Transition Council aims to advise the prime minister on managing the transition, organising new elections and reforming the Constitution. However, **given the government's unsuccessful attempts to establish a dialogue with groups that had not signed the 21 December Agreement, in mid-June the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) organised a meeting in Kingston (Jamaica) with the main Haitian political and social actors, including Ariel Henry and his government, but not the CST, as well as representatives of the international community.** At this meeting, several actions were discussed to reach an agreement to allow new elections to be held, like the expansion of the CST, the formation of a national unity government, the establishment of a new provisional electoral council and the promulgation of constitutional reform. However, the starting positions between the different actors were very distant. While some groups viewed the resignation of the prime minister and his government and the creation of a transitional government as urgent and necessary, Ariel Henry made it clear in Kingston that he was willing to listen to and talk with the opposition, but had no intention of signing a new agreement to replace the one of 21 December. The United Nations announced its support for the 21 December Agreement and said that

it should be the basis for any negotiations to resolve the country's crisis.

Despite the lack of agreements at the Kingston summit, Henry was committed to continuing dialogue in Haiti in the following months. CARICOM appointed an Eminent Persons Group (EPG, composed of the former prime ministers of Jamaica, Bruce Golding; the Bahamas, Perry Christie; and Saint Lucia, Kenneth Anthony, to try to facilitate talks between the groups that did and did not sign the 21 December Agreement. Along these lines, in early July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken visited Haiti a few days apart, urging the main political parties and social groups to make concessions to restore democratic institutions in the country given the serious crisis gripping it. Shortly thereafter, in mid-July, the CARICOM EPG facilitated the first meeting in Haiti. No agreements were reached, but some progress was made in the composition, framework and agenda of the negotiations. In the second half of the year, **between July and December, the EPG travelled to Haiti several times and facilitated five rounds of negotiations.** In September, the EPG publicly warned that the negotiating parties' tone and positions had hardened. For example, those who signed the Montana Agreement, which was signed on 30 August 2021 by nearly a thousand political and social organisations, demanded the immediate resignation of Henry and his government in 2023 as a condition to continue participating in the negotiations, while the party of Claude Joseph, the former prime minister and former acting president following the assassination of Moïse, and one of Henry's main political rivals, declared that he was pulling out of the national dialogue and joining the social protests demanding Henry's resignation. Shortly thereafter, the president of the CST, Mirlande Manigat, warned about the lack of progress in the implementation of the 21 December Agreement and in the negotiations between the government and the opposition on organising new elections. Despite all this, after a visit to the country in mid-December to facilitate the fifth round of negotiations between the parties, the EPG released a statement that was more positive and hopeful regarding the talks.

Gender, peace and security

Senator Mirlande Manigat was appointed president of the High Transition Council (CST), a body provided for in the 21 December Agreement, which came into operation in early February 2023. According to the interim government, this structure aims to promote the national dialogue in the search for a consensus on the main lines of action for the transition period, particularly in matters of public security, the Constitution and elections, economic reforms, justice and the rule of law and social and food security. A law professor and former presidential candidate in 2010 (she won in the first round and lost in the second to

Michel Martelly) and leader of the Rally of Progressive National Democrats (RDNP), Manigat has occasionally been critical of Henry's government. Although the CST did not participate in the Kingston summit organised by CARICOM in June, it did play an important role in the negotiations that took place in Haiti in the second half of the year.

According to the United Nations Secretary-General's report on BINUH released in October, efforts were first made to launch a national action plan to implement Resolution 1325 (2000) in 2023 with the establishment of peace and mediation committees in the departments of Ouest, Centre and Artibonite. BINUH and UN Women engaged women's organisations and networks to enhance peacebuilding and mediation efforts and to boost participation in public policy development to reduce community violence. In July, UN Women held 12 consultative meetings on reducing community violence in the departments of Ouest, Artibonite and Centre, which were attended by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Rights, political leaders and women's organisations. During the meetings, the participants agreed to establish three networks of women mediators and peacebuilders.

South America

Colombia (ELN)	
Negotiating actors	Government, ELN
Third parties	Guarantor countries (Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, Norway, Mexico and Chile); permanent supporters (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, Episcopal Conference of Colombia); supporting countries (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain)
Relevant agreements	"Heaven's Door" Agreement (1988)

Summary:

Since the ELN emerged in 1964, various negotiating processes have tried to bring peace to the country. The first negotiations between the Colombian government and the ELN date from 1991 (Caracas and Tlaxcala). In 1998, both parties signed a peace agreement in Madrid that envisaged holding a national convention. That same year, the "Puerta del Cielo" agreement between the ELN and civil society activists was signed in Mainz, Germany, focused on humanitarian aspects. In 1999, the Colombian government and the ELN resumed meetings in Cuba, which ended in June 2000. The government of Álvaro Uribe resumed peace negotiations with the ELN in Cuba between 2005 and 2007, though no results were achieved. At the end of 2012, the ELN showed its willingness to open new negotiations with President Juan Manuel Santos, appointing a negotiating commission, and exploratory meetings were held. Formal peace negotiations began in 2017, which broke off in 2019 after a serious attack by the ELN in Bogotá. In 2022, after the appointment of Gustavo Petro as president, dialogue with the ELN was restarted.

Peace negotiations took place between the government of Colombia and the armed group ELN throughout 2023. The negotiations were held in five cycles of talks, which followed the first that took place in Caracas between November and December 2022, with which the negotiations officially started and several initial commitments were made. The second cycle took place between 13 February and 10 March in Mexico. There, the parties agreed on a six-point agenda: the participation of civil society in peacebuilding; democracy for peace; transformations for peace; victims; an end to the armed conflict; and a general plan for implementing the agreements, revalidating the agenda agreed upon during the negotiations with the Santos administration. The most notable thing about the second cycle was that the parties agreed to analyse the country's "economic model". This was an important new development compared to previous peace negotiations, in which economic issues had been a red line for the Colombian state. Under the heading of democracy for peace, the parties also agreed to address the situation of people detained during social protests. The third cycle took place in Havana (Cuba) between 2 May and 19 June, when several important agreements were made. Firstly, the parties agreed to establish a National Participation Committee made up of 30 organisations whose work was to begin in July and defined by the parties as "the heart" of the process, since the issue of society's participation had always formed part of the guerrilla group's top demands. Secondly, **a bilateral ceasefire was agreed for a period of six months that began on 3 August**. A Monitoring and Verification Mechanism was also established, made up of delegates from the Episcopal Conference and members of the Public Force and the guerrilla group. Its spokesperson is the United Nations Mission. The verification mechanism was to be in force until 29 January 2024. After the ceasefire agreement, a series of protocols were defined for its implementation.

In August, the fourth cycle of negotiations was held in Venezuela, the first after the ceasefire began, which dealt with issues related to the establishment of a political framework that would allow for humanitarian actions linked to the ceasefire, as well as the creation of humanitarian zones in areas affected by the armed conflict. Thus, it was agreed to establish two "critical zones", as they are called in the agreement, in Bajo Calima and San Juan, with not only humanitarian actions but also socioeconomic ones. In addition, an agreement was reached on the situation of ELN prisoners, as well as the continuation of the design of the civil society participation process, with five committees in charge of preparing 25 regional peace processes. After the fourth cycle, in October, a negotiating session was held in Colombia for the first time, at the headquarters of the UN Verification Mission in Bogota, with the 19

Major progress was made in the negotiations between Colombia and the ELN, such as the ceasefire and the ELN's commitment to put an end to kidnappings

delegates participating. The meeting was focused on monitoring aspects of the negotiations, such as the National Participation Committee, the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of the ceasefire and others. However, the peace process underwent a serious crisis in October when the ELN kidnapped the parents of international football player Luis Díaz. His mother was released a few hours later, but his father was kidnapped for 12 days, raising tension in the negotiations. However, the release of Luis Manuel Díaz in November allowed the negotiations in Mexico to resume in their fifth cycle, leading to several agreements, such as one ending kidnappings for extortion (retention for economic purposes, according to the ELN) and another on continuing work to create the conditions to prolong the ceasefire. Another enormously important development was the formation of eight critical zones (parts of the country affected by violence and subject to specific actions defined by the parties), humanitarian actions and a commission of the roundtable to coordinate the plans for taking care of and socially transforming the zones. After the conclusion of the fifth cycle of negotiations, the parties agreed to resume dialogue in the sixth cycle, which was scheduled to begin in Cuna in January 2024. During the fifth cycle of talks, Vera Grabe was appointed head of the government negotiating delegation, replacing Otty Patiño, who was appointed High Commissioner for Peace after Danilo Rueda stepped down.

Gender, peace and security

Women remained actively involved in the two negotiating delegations. For the first time, a woman was appointed as chief negotiator of a delegation when Vera Grabe became head of the government delegation. Proportionally, the 15-member government delegation included seven women and the eight-member ELN delegation included three women. However, no specific mechanism was defined to address the gender approach in the talks. The delegations reiterated their commitment to the gender approach and the "effective participation" of women, as they noted in the joint statement issued on 8 March. Meanwhile, the National Participation Committee was formed as a result of an agreement between the parties, with representatives of both negotiating delegations and civil society. Twenty-nine of its 81 members were women and various women's and LGBTIQ+ organisations were involved, such as Plataforma LGBTI por la Paz, Colombia Diversa, Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz, Red Nacional de Mujeres, Juntanza de Mujeres y Paz, Madres Comunitarias, Colempresarias and Red de Mujeres del Caribe Colombiano. In addition, several women represented environmental, indigenous, black, *raizal*, *palenquera*, peasant and human rights organisations, among others.

Colombia (EMC)	
Negotiating actors	Government, Estado Mayor Central (EMC)
Third parties	Permanent supporters (Episcopal Conference of Colombia, World Council of Churches, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Colombia, OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia), guarantor countries (Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, Venezuela)
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire agreement (2023)

Summary:

Estado Mayor Central emerged as an armed group made up of members of the FARC led by Iván Mordisco and Gentil Duarte, who abandoned the peace process before the Colombian government and the FARC signed the 2016 peace agreement and were joined by other dissident groups that left the FARC after it was signed. The group expanded with the recruitment of new members with no previous ties to the FARC. After the inauguration of Colombian President Gustavo Petro in 2022, the beginning of Total Peace was announced, a public policy that aims to build peace in the country by involving all active armed actors. As part of Total Peace, a negotiating process began with the EMC in 2023.

Peace negotiations officially began between the government of Colombia and the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC), which originated as a dissident splinter group of the now-extinct FARC, after both parties agreed to begin them in September. The negotiations were framed as part of the Total Peace policy promoted by the Colombian government of Gustavo Petro. In March, the government had announced the start of peace negotiations alongside Attorney General Francisco Barbosa’s revocation of arrest warrants for 19 guerrilla fighters led by Néstor Gregorio Vera Fernández, also known as “Iván Mordisco”. This revocation indicated that there would be rapprochements aimed at peace negotiations. In a joint event, Minister of the Environment Susana Muhamad, High Commissioner for Peace Danilo Rueda and Norway’s Minister of Climate and Environment at the time, Espen Barth Eide, announced that environmental issues would have a prominent place on the agenda of the negotiations with the EMC. However, the talks entered a crisis when the EMC massacred four indigenous youth in May, which led to the end of the ceasefire that had been announced in late 2022. After a meeting in the department of Norte de Santander, on 16 October the parties issued a joint statement announcing a bilateral ceasefire in force between 17 October and 15 January 2024. The Mechanism of Oversight, Monitoring and Verification (MVMV) was created to monitor and follow up on compliance with the ceasefire. It was made up of representatives of the government, the EMC, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia and the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process. In addition, aspects related to the agenda and schedule of the negotiations were announced. The beginning of the ceasefire scheduled for October was threatened by disagreements between the

parties, though finally, on the day scheduled for its start, they agreed to cease attacks between them and delay the official start of the bilateral ceasefire and the formal start of the negotiating process, which took place days later. In early November, the EMC suspended the talks again, which were finally resumed in mid-November. In December, a second cycle of talks took place in the department of Cauca, with the armed group committing not to carry out kidnappings and the government pledging to denounce collaboration between members of the Public Force with illegal armed groups. The ceasefire verification mechanism was also set up. The parties also committed to listening to the communities of Cauca, Arauca, Antioquia, Putumayo and Caquetá. After concluding the second cycle, the parties agreed that the process would continue in January 2024 in Bogota. Rapprochement continued with the Second Marquetalia armed group, which also emerged as a dissident splinter group of the FARC, though no formal negotiating process was consolidated.

Gender, peace and security

There were different notable aspects to the gender, peace and security agenda as part of the negotiations. First, both negotiating parties and third parties included women in the delegations participating in the talks. Geny Calvo Olomos and Luz Dary Landázuri participated in the government’s delegation, two women out of a total of 10 delegates. Fernanda Briceño was involved in the EMC’s delegation, one woman out of a total of seven delegates. The permanent supporters included one woman, Edelma Gómez, in the OAS mission. Alongside women’s direct involvement as negotiators, the “Agreement for respecting the civilian population and the implementation of the bilateral, temporary ceasefire of a national nature with territorial impact between the national government of the Republic of Colombia and the Estado Mayor Central of the FARC-EP” reached by both parties, included an allusion to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as a framework of reference for the negotiations. Furthermore, within the guiding principles of the talks, population, territorial, environmental, gender, ethnic, participation and inclusion of diversity approaches were included.

Colombia (FARC)	
Negotiating actors	Government, Comunes
Third parties	UN Verification Mission in Colombia, International Verification Component (Technical Secretariat of the Notables, University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute)
Relevant agreements	The Havana peace agreement (2016)

Summary:

Since the founding of the first guerrilla groups in 1964,

there have been several negotiation attempts. In the early 1990s several small groups were demobilized, but not the FARC and the ELN, which are the two most important. In 1998, President Pastrana authorized the demilitarization of a large region of Colombia, around the area of San Vicente del Caguán, in order to conduct negotiations with the FARC which lasted until 2002 and were unsuccessful. In 2012, and after several months of secret negotiations in Cuba, new talks began with the FARC in Cuba based on a specific agenda and including citizen participation mechanisms. After four years of negotiations, a historic peace agreement for the Colombian people was signed in late 2016.

The implementation of the peace agreement reached in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the now-extinct FARC-EP continued in 2023. It was the first year of implementation by the new administration headed by Gustavo Petro and led to some institutional changes, such as the creation of the Final Agreement Implementation Unit. In addition, some of the bodies established by the agreement that had been paralysed during the government of Iván Duque were reactivated, such as the Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI) and the National Commission for Security Guarantees (CNGS) and international support. In its reports on the status of implementation, the Kroc Institute¹ described some progress made in the implementation of the agreement, though it also identified many remaining challenges to making the agreement fully effective, especially with regard to the lack of progress in the implementation of ethnic and gender approaches. The provisions relating to comprehensive rural reform were those with the lowest degree of implementation.

Notably, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights appointed former Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonia Urrejola as an international human rights expert charged with identifying and verifying obstacles to the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, particularly those publicly announced by Colombia’s Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) in March 2023. Urrejola identified seven main obstacles in the implementation process: 1) the unfavourable political context in the wake of the agreement, with misgivings about the institutions that emerged from the agreement and the abuse of judicial prosecution, which shook public confidence in the agreement and in the transitional justice processes; 2) the continuum of violence in the areas where the FARC have demobilised, which has led to the population to continue to suffer from the impacts of that violence; 3) violations of the right to life and personal integrity of the signatories and those undergoing reincorporation (as of December 2023, 404 people who had signed the agreement had been murdered, including 49 indigenous people, 57 Afro-Colombians and 11 women); 4) violations of the

right to legal security of the people appearing, since not everyone who signed the agreement are aware of the status of their amnesty process; 5) breakdowns in inter-institutional coordination between the different organisations responsible for applying the agreement, with Urrejola declaring that it was necessary to establish “a single, high-level state body that leads the implementation of the agreement, establishes dialogue between the different public policies of transitional justice and ensures institutional and interjurisdictional coordination”; 6) the legacy of the Commission for Clarifying the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, for which it is considered essential to grant sufficient resources and capacities to the Committee to Follow-up and Monitor the Recommendations of the Truth Commission and to spread the recommendations across the country; and 7) delays in implementing the ethnic chapter and gender provisions, whose implementation is happening much slower than the agreement as a whole.

Gender, peace and security

The implementation of the agreement’s gender focus continued to progress slowly. According to the Kroc Institute, by the end of 2022, 18% of the provisions related to this approach had not begun to be implemented, 52% were in a minimum state of implementation, 18% were in an intermediate state and only 12% had been fully implemented. The Special Women’s Instance for the for the Implementation of the Gender Based Approach continued its work monitoring the implementation and submitted recommendations to improve it to the UN Security Council. Furthermore, in September the Special Jurisdiction for Peace announced it was filing a macro case on gender violence during the armed conflict, which will be subdivided into three processes. One will address violence against the civilian population by the FARC, another will investigate violence by the Public Force and the third will deal with violence within both the Public Force and the FARC. The filing of this macro case had been demanded by women’s civil society organisations.

Venezuela	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	Norway, Russia, the Netherlands
Relevant agreements	--
Summary:	
Faced with the worsening political and social crisis that Venezuela experienced after the death in 2013 of President Hugo Chávez, the leader of the so-called Bolivarian	

1 Echavarría Álvarez, Josefina, et al. *Seis años de implementación del Acuerdo Final: retos y oportunidades en el nuevo ciclo político*. Notre Dame, IN and Bogotá, Colombia: Matriz de Acuerdos de Paz/ Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies/Keough School of Global Affairs, 2023. Echavarría Álvarez, Josefina, et al. *Informe trimestral: estado efectivo de la implementación del Acuerdo Final, July – September 2023*. Notre Dame, IN: Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies/Keough School of Global Affairs, 2023.

Revolution, his successor Nicolás Maduro's narrow victory in the presidential election of April 2013 and the protests staged in the early months of 2014, which caused the death of around 40 people, in March 2014 the government said it was willing to accept talks with the opposition facilitated by UNASUR or the Vatican, but categorically rejected any mediation by the OAS. Shortly after Pope Francis called for dialogue and a group of UNASUR foreign ministers visited Venezuela and held many meetings, preliminary talks began between Caracas and the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) in April 2014, to which the Secretary of State of the Vatican, the former Apostolic Nuncio to Venezuela, as well as the foreign ministers of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, were invited as witnesses in good faith. Although the talks were interrupted in May 2014 due to developments in the political situation, both UNASUR and the Vatican continued to facilitate through Apostolic Nuncio Aldo Giordano. In May 2016, shortly after a visit to Venezuela by the former leaders of Spain (Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero), Panama (Martín Torrijos) and the Dominican Republic (Leonel Fernández) at the request of UNASUR, the Venezuelan government and opposition met in the Dominican Republic with the three aforementioned ex-leaders and UNASUR representatives. After a meeting between Maduro and Pope Francis in October, both parties met again in Venezuela under the auspices of the Pope's new special envoy, Emil Paul Tscherrig. In late 2017, both sides decided to resume the talks in the Dominican Republic starting in December, accompanied by several countries chosen by both parties (Chile, Mexico and Paraguay by the opposition and Nicaragua, Bolivia and San Vicente and the Grenadines by the government). Although some agreements were reached during the several rounds of negotiations that took place between December 2017 and February 2018, Maduro's unilateral call for a presidential election for 2018 brought them to a standstill and caused the withdrawal of several of the accompanying countries designated by the opposition to facilitate them.

Alongside the bilateral and direct talks held between the governments of Venezuela and the United States in Doha, mainly concerning sanctions and energy issues, **the Norwegian government continued to facilitate several informal meetings during the year between Caracas and the Unitary Platform, which led to the signing of two agreements in Barbados in mid-October, the most important of them on the electoral conditions of the 2024 presidential election.** In the first half of the year, the parties held various exploratory meetings, but the government of Venezuela formally rejected any resumption of negotiations until the opposition fulfilled its commitment made in November 2022 to apply pressure to unblock Venezuela's frozen assets abroad to finance a fund managed by the United Nations to pay for social programmes for health, education, food and electrical infrastructure. In addition to the aforementioned informal meetings between the parties and the continued and direct dialogue between Washington and the Unitary Platform, two diplomatic initiatives led respectively by Colombia and France stood out in the first half of the year. In mid-July, during the Third Summit of Leaders of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), French President Emmanuel Macron called a meeting between the head of the negotiating panel of the Unitary Platform, Gerardo

Blyde, and Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, in which the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, also participated, as well as Argentine President Alberto Fernández, Brazilian President Lula da Silva and Colombian President Gustavo Petro. According to statements made by some of the leaders present, the parties reached no significant agreements, but there was a positive exchange of opinions about the main points on the agenda, such as the conditions for the presidential election.

Previously, in late April, **the Colombian government had organised an international conference on Venezuela in Colombia that involved representatives of 20 countries and enjoyed the prior support of the government of Venezuela, the Unitary Platform and the US government.**

The conference was aimed at getting the parties to agree on the conditions for talks between Caracas and the opposition to resume. It ended with a statement describing the three objectives to be achieved: the establishment of an electoral timetable to hold free and transparent elections with full guarantees for all Venezuelan actors; the gradual lifting of sanctions on the Venezuelan government as the agreed promises are fulfilled; and the resumption of talks in Mexico accompanied by activation of the aforementioned fund for social investment in Venezuela. Though the conference did not yield significant progress or signify the resumption of dialogue between the government and the opposition, President Petro promised to maintain contact with the parties and to convene a new meeting (with a format and date to be determined) to specify and follow up on the commitments made at the summit. Some analysts said that the Bogota summit also denoted a certain regional depolarisation in Latin America with respect to the Venezuela crisis, as the arrival to power of some more progressive governments (such as in Colombia, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Peru and Mexico) had resulted in more conciliatory policies towards the Venezuelan government. Along the same lines, Washington was also showing a more pragmatic position towards Caracas. Several analysts pointed out that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Washington's need to find alternative oil suppliers to Moscow contributed decisively to the rapprochement of positions between both governments. As such, the governments of the United States and Venezuela held direct meetings in Doha at various times during the year (and previously in 2022). In June, for example, the president of the National Assembly and the government's chief negotiator with the opposition, Jorge Rodríguez, met with a direct representative of Joe Biden bilaterally and without intermediaries. In these meetings, which intensified in September and October, the lifting of economic sanctions (about 600, according to Caracas) was mainly addressed, especially those related to the energy and oil sectors, though they were conditional on the government making progress on electoral conditions, human rights and the release of detained persons, among other issues.

The most important progress of the year took place in mid-October, when the Venezuelan government and the Unitary Platform signed an agreement in Barbados called the Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All, in which both parties pledged to hold the presidential election in the second half of 2024; to promote a set of electoral guarantees before the National Electoral Council; to respect each actor's right to choose their own candidates according to their internal mechanisms and with respect for the Constitution; to update the electoral register; to perform audits of all political actors under international observation; to request the invitation of electoral observation missions from international bodies like the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the Interamerican Union of Electoral Bodies and the Carter Center; to reject any form of political violence or foreign interference; and to create a monitoring and verification mechanism of the dialogue and negotiating process, though the details were not made public. The meeting in Barbados was the fifth between the parties since the negotiating process began in Mexico in August 2021, with Norway facilitating them and Russia and the Netherlands acting as supporting countries. Caracas and the Unitary Platform also signed a second agreement during the meeting called the Partial Agreement for the Guarantee of the Vital Interests of the Nation that ratified Venezuela's historical, sovereign and inalienable rights over the Essequibo region and rejected the Guyanese government's awarding of concessions to explore and exploit energy in marine areas pending delimitation between both countries. The day after both agreements were signed in Barbados, the US government issued a statement announcing that it was lifting some sanctions (temporary authorisation of transactions in the oil and gas sector in Venezuela, or elimination of the ban on secondary trading of Venezuelan sovereign bonds, for example) and urged Caracas to begin the release of all people detained for political reasons and to readmit all candidates for the presidential election before 30 November.

Despite the importance of such agreements, a few days later the dialogue was interrupted and tension between the parties increased significantly. On 22 October, the opposition carried out its primary election to choose the person who will run in the 2024 presidential election. **According to the opposition, around 2.4 million people participated in the process, in which María Corina Machado, disqualified from running for public office for 15 years, won 93% of the votes.** However, the government thought that the process had been fraudulent and in late October the Supreme Court invalidated the results of the primaries. Furthermore, the government's chief negotiator argued that the election violated the agreement signed in Barbados, asking the government of Norway to hold an emergency meeting and activate the mechanism to verify the commitments made. The US warned about the possibility of reimposing the

sanctions lifted a few days earlier if the aforementioned disqualifications were not withdrawn before 30 November. In mid-November, the EU extended its sanctions on Venezuela and the government announced its intention not to invite the EU to observe the elections. On 30 November, the government and the Unitary Platform signed another agreement by which any candidate had until 15 December to submit an appeal (or precautionary protection measures) to the Supreme Court of Justice against the disqualification, as it is the court with the power to make a final decision on the matter.

Finally, on 20 December, a prisoner exchange agreement between the governments of Venezuela and the United States became effective, which included the release and delivery to Venezuela of Alex Saab, a Colombian businessman who is a close collaborator of Caracas (and the front man of Nicolás Maduro, according to some sources) and had been arrested in Cape Verde in 2020 and extradited to the US on charges of money laundering, among other issues. In the last two years, Caracas had unsuccessfully requested his release, arguing that he was part of its delegation in the negotiating process with the Unitary Platform. The government of Venezuela released 10 people with US citizenship and more than 20 with Venezuelan citizenship, some of whom were linked to the opposition and María Corina Machado. According to some media outlets, the deal consolidates the agreement in Barbados and facilitates the necessary steps to hold the presidential election in 2024.

Gender, peace and security

Although there is no evidence that the negotiations between the government and the Unitary Platform are addressing issues specifically linked to the political participation of women or have integrated a gender approach, three women are involved in the government's negotiating delegation (Génesis Garvett, Gabriela Jiménez and Camila Fabri de Saab) and two are participating in the Unitary Platform's negotiating team (Mariela Magallanes and Claudia Nikken). Two other women who are not part of the negotiating panels were significantly important in the strategic direction of the negotiations. For the government, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez held a direct meeting with the head of the negotiating panel of the Unitary Platform. For the opposition, María Corina Machado, plays an important role in the negotiations facilitated by the government of Norway as the big winner of the opposition primaries. Furthermore, in December, Machado declared that although the Unitary Platform is not involved in the parallel negotiations between the governments of Venezuela and the United States, the opposition has been involved in such conversations to ensure consistency and complementarity between both negotiating tracks.

Venezuela – Guyana	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition
Third parties	CELAC, CARICOM, Brazil, United Nations, Cuba
Relevant agreements	Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace between Guyana and Venezuela

Summary:

Essequibo is a territory formally controlled and administered by Guyana, but whose sovereignty is historically disputed by Venezuela. Covering almost 160,000 km² and rich in minerals and other natural resources, this territory was part of the Captaincy General of Venezuela and was integrated into the new state of Venezuela once it obtained independence from the Spanish Crown in the 19th century. The British Empire later colonised the region, establishing British Guiana, now Guyana. Given the lack of agreement on defining the border between the British Empire and Venezuela, an Arbitration Award issued in Paris in 1899 handed the disputed territory to the British Empire. This decision was not recognised by Venezuela, which argued that there had been bias and cartographic manipulation during the judicial process. In the early 1960s, the United Nations decided to admit Venezuela's territorial claim, opening the door to the 1966 Geneva Agreement between Venezuela and the United Kingdom (in consultation with the government of Guyana, which gained independence from the United Kingdom that same year). Under this agreement, the parties undertook to resolve the dispute through friendly negotiations. Although Venezuela viewed the Geneva Agreement as annulling the Paris Award, it also maintained the status quo of the territory (administered by Guyana) until the final resolution of the dispute. In 2018, Guyana raised the resolution of the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but Venezuela does not recognise its jurisdiction or competence to resolve the dispute, alleging that the Geneva Agreement is the only valid mechanism to deal with it. In 2020, the ICJ declared itself competent to resolve and hand down a ruling on the merits of the issue. It ratified its position in 2023, but at the same time it did not prohibit (as Guyana had requested) the referendum on Essequibo organised by Caracas in December 2023 shortly after the government of Guyana granted several companies concessions to explore for hydrocarbon deposits in waters disputed with Venezuela.

As a result of the diplomatic crisis and the military escalation caused by the referendum in Venezuela on the annexation of the disputed region of Essequibo (under the sovereignty and administration of Guyana), much diplomatic effort was made by regional bodies and governments in the last quarter of the year, which in part led to a summit between the presidents of Guyana and Venezuela in mid-December. This summit was held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and was co-organised mainly by the governments of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which holds the pro tempore presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and of Dominica, which holds the presidency of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and by Brazilian President Lula da Silva, represented at the summit by his personal envoy Celso Amorim. The

prime ministers of the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago also attended, as members of CARICOM, as did the foreign ministers of Colombia and Honduras in their capacity as the CELAC Troika. The summit was observed by the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Chief of Staff of the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General.

During the summit, Nicolás Maduro and Irfaan Ali signed the Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace between Guyana and Venezuela in which they committed not to threaten each other or use force mutually; to refrain, in word or deed, from escalating the conflict; and to cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground that could lead to tension between them and, in the event that it occurs, to communicate immediately with each other, as well as with CARICOM, CELAC and the president of Brazil. Maduro and Ali also pledged to establish a joint commission of the ministers of foreign affairs and officials of the two governments to address mutually agreed issues; to continue the dialogue on the dispute, to meet again in Brazil in the next three months, or at another agreed time; and to maintain the prime ministers of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica and the president of Brazil as main interlocutors of the dialogue, and the UN Secretary-General as an observer. Finally, both leaders agreed that any dispute between the two countries will be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Geneva Agreement of 17 February 1966, but at the same time Guyana made it clear that it was committed to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice to resolve the border controversy, while Venezuela expressed its lack of consent and recognition of the International Court of Justice and its jurisdiction in the dispute.

In the days following the summit, there were no military incidents, the sabre-rattling rhetoric of recent weeks was toned down and both leaders appealed to the peaceful coexistence of the two countries, urged dialogue and repeated their commitment that Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be a zone of peace. However, both Maduro and Ali remained firm in their positions. For example, Ali said that the status of Essequibo is not the subject of discussion, negotiation or deliberation, and that the territorial dispute between both countries must be resolved exclusively by the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, he declared that his country had every right to exploit resources, issue licenses and grant concessions in its sovereign territory. Ali also blasted the permits granted by Maduro to Venezuelan oil companies for the exploration and exploitation of oil, gas and minerals in Essequibo.

Although the summit in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was perhaps the most important public event in the

process of resolving the dispute between Guyana and Venezuela, during the year it emerged that there had been informal discussions promoted by regional actors in the previous months. For example, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel declared that his government had been facilitating contacts and discussions at the highest level between the parties at least since September. In the days before the summit, the UN Security Council held an emergency session behind closed doors on which no agreements were reached. On 1 January 2024, Guyana joined the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member. Along the same lines, after a MERCOSUR summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador

and Peru signed a joint declaration expressing “their deep concern with the increase in tension” between Venezuela and Guyana and urged both parties to talk and seek a peaceful solution to the controversy. According to some media outlets, during the meeting Lula da Silva proposed that CELAC facilitate the dialogue between both countries. Previously, Lula had tried unsuccessfully to get UNASUR, inactive for some years, to play some kind of role in the search for solutions. Finally, both CARICOM and the OAS issued statements critical of the decisions of the Venezuelan government, calling for territorial integrity and resolution of the disputes in accordance with international law and by the International Court of Justice.

4. Peace negotiations in Asia and the Pacific

- In Asia and the Pacific there were 10 negotiation processes, 23% of the total cases in the world.
- After a six-year hiatus, the Philippine government and the NDF signed a joint statement in November pledging to try to resolve the armed conflict through dialogue.
- The Philippine government entered into negotiations with the two main factions of the MNLF regarding the full implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement, the participation of the MNLF in the government of the Bangsamoro region and the reintegration of MNLF fighters.
- In southern Thailand, the government and the BRN signed a road map, the BRN accepted that other armed groups may participate in the negotiations, Malaysia appointed a new facilitator and the government appointed a new negotiating team.
- The government of Myanmar and the armed group MNDA reached a ceasefire agreement in December that failed to end the most serious escalation of violence in the country since the 2021 coup.
- North Korea and South Korea closed the door to any dialogue on the reunification of both countries.

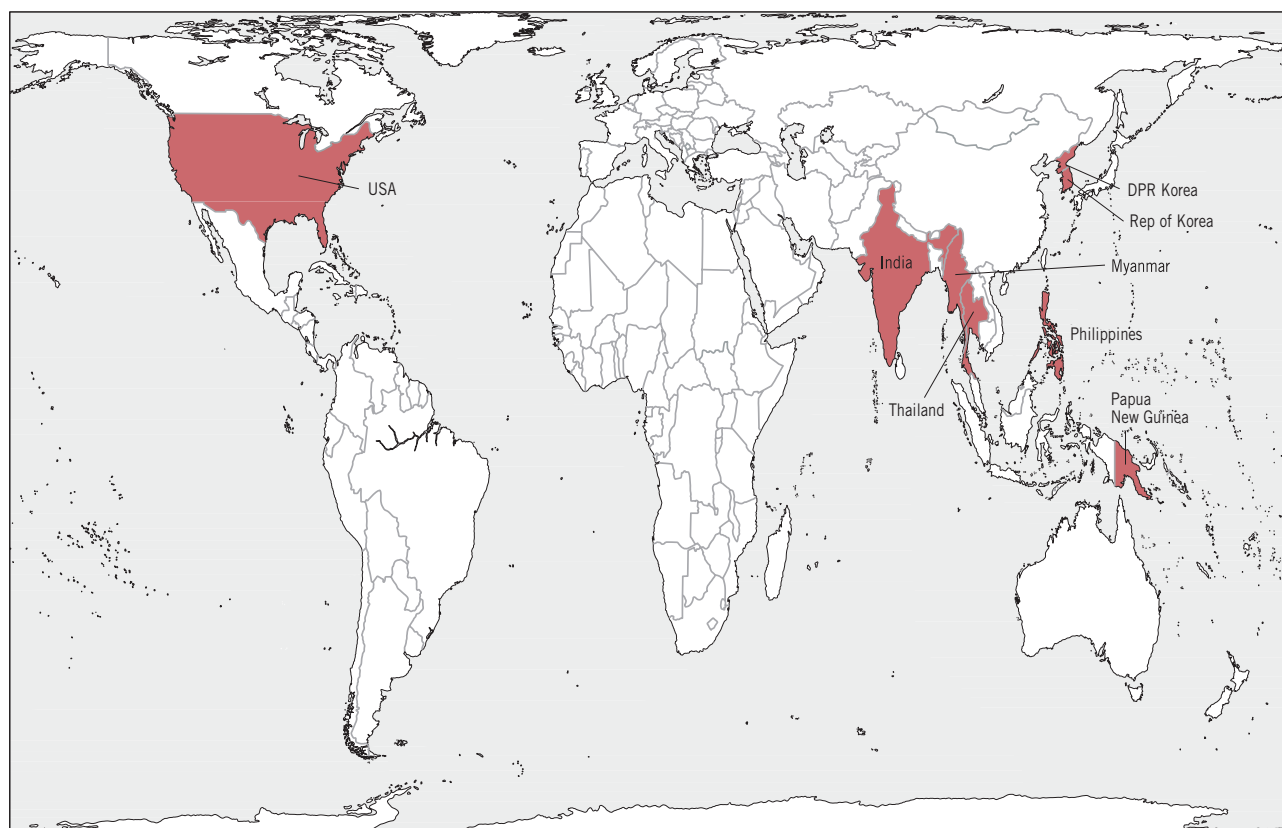
This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023, both the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each case on the continent throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Asia and the Pacific that hosted peace negotiations during 2023.

Table 4.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
North Korea – South Korea	North Korea, South Korea	--
North Korea – USA	North Korea, USA	--
Philippines (MILF)	Government, MILF, Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Malaysia, Third Party Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
Philippines (MNLF)	Government, MNLF (factions led by Nur Misuari and Muslimin Sema)	--
Philippines (NDF)	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of various communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political arm of the NPA)	Norway
India (Assam)	Government, ULFA-PTF, ULFA-I; AANLA, AANLA (FG), BCF, BCF (BT), STF, ACMA, ACMA (FG) and APA	--
India (Nagaland)	Indian government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/GDRN/NA, ZUF	--
Myanmar	Government; armed groups that have signed the ceasefire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU, KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP and LDU; armed groups that have not signed the NCA: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA and MNDA	China, ASEAN
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Government, Autonomous Bougainville Government	United Nations
Thailand (south)	Government, BRN	Malaysia

The peace negotiations in bold type are described in the chapter.
 -- There are no third parties or no public proof of their existence.

Map 4.1. Peace negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023

4.1 Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

There were **10 negotiating processes in Asia and the Pacific** in 2023, the same number as in recent years. Compared to the previous year, one case was no longer considered a negotiating process (Pakistan) and another was added to the list (the Philippines, in relation to the MNLF). The peace process between the Pakistani government and the armed Taliban group TTP broke down in November after the latter ended the ceasefire agreement that had been reached in the previous months. After the ceasefire broke down, there was a rise in violence and the armed conflict intensified. The Philippine government resumed talks with the two main factions of the MNLF regarding full implementation of the 1996 peace agreement, the group's participation in the government of the Bangsamoro region and the reintegration of former combatants. Half the negotiations in Asia and the Pacific took place in Southeast Asia: the Philippines (MILF, MNLF and NDF), Myanmar and Thailand (South). Two were in South Asia, specifically in India (Assam and Nagaland). Two took place in East Asia: North Korea – South Korea and North Korea – USA. One was active in the Pacific region, in Papua New Guinea (Bougainville). Around one third of the negotiations were linked to resolving active armed

conflicts, though with different degrees of violence and confrontation between the parties. This was true in the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar and Thailand (south). The rest of the cases were socio-political crises, whether internal (India (Assam and Nagaland), Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)) or between states (North Korea – South Korea and North Korea – USA), and there was one armed conflict in which a peace agreement was signed (the Philippines (MILF, MNLF)).

The **actors that participated in all the different negotiating processes** included their respective governments. In some cases, the negotiations were directly linked to armed groups, such as the NSCN-IM in Nagaland and the ULFA-PTF in Assam (both cases in India), the BRN in Thailand and the MNDAA and other groups in Myanmar, or to political groups representing insurgent groups, such as in the Philippines, where Manila is negotiating with the National Democratic Front (NDF) in representation of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA. Along the same lines, the Burmese government also held talks with formal and informal groups of armed organisations, such as the Three Brothers Alliance (made up of the MNDAA, the TNLA and the AA) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement of 2015. In other cases, the negotiations were between governments and armed groups that were not fully disarmed or demobilised, yet no longer maintained regular and

sustained armed activity. This was the case of the MILF and the MNLF in the Philippines, the ULFA-PTF in the Indian state of Assam and the Naga armed groups in Nagaland, also in India.

In other contexts, only governments led the negotiations, whether the conflict was between states or internal or domestic in nature. The former included the interstate negotiations between the governments of North and South Korea and between North Korea and the United States. In other contexts, negotiations took place between central and regional governments, such as the process between the government of the Philippines and the regional government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the negotiations between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government. Though the central Indian government led the negotiations with various armed groups in the states of Nagaland and Assam, their governments were also involved to some extent in the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Therefore, compared to other regions, sub-state authorities played a significant role in several of the negotiating processes in Asia.

The **main issues** behind the negotiations in Asia and the Pacific were related to autonomy, self-determination, independence, territorial accommodation and recognition of the identity of different national minorities, such as in India (Assam and Nagaland), the Philippines (MILF, MNLF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south). Another issue in several negotiating processes was the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. In the Philippines, the MILF and the government oversaw the third phase of the disarmament and demobilisation of former MILF combatants, which began in 2015 and has so far included 26,145 of the 40,000 former combatants included in the 2014 peace agreement. As part of the commitments made by the Philippine government in the 1996 peace agreement with the MNLF, Manila also promoted reintegration programmes for MNLF combatants in several regions of Mindanao. In Assam, as a result of the agreement signed in September 2022 between the Indian government and eight Adivasi armed groups, 1,182 members of five of these groups (AANLA, ACMA, APA, BCF and STF) handed over their weapons in July and received money in exchange. Finally, certain procedural issues gained importance in several of the negotiating processes in Asia and the Pacific in 2023 and were more linked to the design of the process than to any substantive issues of the negotiations. In the Philippines, for example, the government and the NDF reaffirmed their

The main issues on which the negotiations in Asia pivoted were related to autonomy, self-determination, independence, territorial accommodation and recognition of the identity of different national minorities

commitment to resolving the armed conflict active since the 1960s through dialogue, but it was not clear whether this was a resumption of the talks that were interrupted in 2017, which would imply resuming the road map and agreements signed thus far, or the beginning of a new negotiating process, detached from the frameworks and commitments of the last three decades. There were also significant developments in procedural aspects in southern Thailand. The new government that succeeded the military junta that had ruled the country in recent years appointed a new negotiating panel, while the government of Malaysia, which mediates the talks, designated a new facilitator. The BRN showed its willingness to include new armed actors in the process. The central government of Papua New Guinea and the autonomous government of the Bougainville region focused their discussions on the procedure for deciding on the political status and possible independence of Bougainville, debating whether a simple or qualified majority would suffice.

The Philippine government publicly declared its intention to work so that the development of a new autonomous regime in Mindanao (the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) could merge the negotiating processes and peace agreements between the MNLF and the MILF, which signed peace agreements with Manila in 1996 and 2014, respectively.

Fifty per cent of the peace processes in Asia and the Pacific were not facilitated by **third parties**, a higher proportion than in most regions in the world. Specifically, the cases in which the dialogue between the parties was direct and without external facilitation were North Korea – South Korea, North Korea – USA, the Indian states of Assam and Nagaland and the Philippines (MNLF). The negotiations that did enjoy outside support were characterised by a lesser third-party presence in different roles, since most only had one or two actors facilitating the dialogue. This was the case in the negotiations between the Philippines and the NDF, which were supported by Norway; in the negotiations between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, supported by the United Nations; in the negotiations between the Thai government and the armed opposition group BRN, facilitated by Malaysia; and in Myanmar, where China tried to promote negotiations between the Burmese government and different armed ethnic groups and ASEAN maintained contacts with the military junta to resolve the political crisis that the country has been undergoing since the 2021 coup d'état. The sole case in which third-party support was more complex and plural was the implementation of the peace agreement signed by the Philippine government and the MILF in 2014. In addition to the Malaysian-facilitated

talks between the government panel and the MILF, the peace agreement implementation process was supported by the Third Party Monitoring Team, which was in charge of supervising the implementation of the agreements signed between the MILF and the government, and the International Decommissioning Body, made up of Türkiye, Norway, Brunei and local staff from the Philippines, to oversee the mobilisation of 40,000 former MILF combatants. In line with the limited participation of third parties in facilitating and supporting negotiating processes in Asia and the Pacific, the role of **international and regional organisations** was symbolic and much less significant than in other regions of the world. Notable examples included the UN-facilitated talks between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to determine the political status of Bougainville and the role played by ASEAN to promote a solution to the political crisis in Myanmar after the coup d'état in 2021.

Fifty per cent of the peace processes in Asia and the Pacific were not facilitated by third parties, a higher proportion than in most regions in the world

With regard to the **trend**, important **progress** was made in some peace negotiations in Asia and the Pacific. For example, the Philippine government expedited the granting of amnesty to different insurgent organisations, certified the completion of the third phase of the demobilisation process of former MILF combatants (which included 26,000 of the 40,000 ex-combatants expected across all phases), resumed talks with the two main MNLF factions regarding the full implementation of the 1996 peace agreement, the group's participation in the government of the Bangsamoro region and the reintegration of its combatants and publicly declared its intention to merge the negotiating processes with the MILF and the MNLF. However, the event with the greatest political impact in the country was the joint statement between Manila and the NDF that announced their commitment to trying to resolve the armed conflict through dialogue after a six-year hiatus in the negotiating process. Some important progress was made in the negotiating process in southern Thailand, such as the appointment of a new facilitator by Malaysia, the appointment of a new negotiating panel by the new Thai government that won the elections held in May, the BRN's acceptance of other armed groups' participation in the negotiating process and especially the signing of a shared road map between both parties that must be implemented in 2023 and 2024. In Myanmar, a ceasefire agreement was reached between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed group MNDAA in December. Facilitated by China, the agreement was made after an unprecedented escalation of the armed conflict in northern Shan State. However, the agreement failed to end the escalation. In the Indian state of Assam, important progress was made in the talks between the government and the pro-

negotiations faction of the armed group ULFA (ULFA-PTF). Indeed, various media outlets indicated that a peace agreement was expected to be signed before the next elections to the lower house of India's bicameral Parliament that would take place between April and May 2024. The Indian government also announced an initiative to approach relatives of members of the ULFA faction opposed to the negotiations and headed by Paresh Baruah.

However, some processes suffered from **impasse**, paralysis and even setbacks. In the Indian state of Nagaland, for example, the peace negotiations between the Indian government and the Naga armed group NSCN-IM remained at a standstill, mainly due to disagreement about the issue of a flag and Constitution for Nagaland. There were major disagreements several times during the year in the negotiating process between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government about procedural and substantive issues of the process, especially regarding the format and the necessary majority in the national Parliament for the vote on Bougainville's independence. The Bougainville authorities said they had no confidence in the central government and accused it of hampering the process. Despite the joint statement released by the Philippine government and the NDF about resuming the talks after a six-year hiatus, in late December Manila expressed its deep displeasure with a statement issued by the Communist Party of the Philippines that announced the start of the Third Rectification Movement, declared the primacy of armed struggle to achieve change and argued that peace talks were one more battlefield for advancing its objectives. There was no progress in the negotiations between the US and North Korea over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal and relations between South Korea and North Korea deteriorated significantly during the year, to the point that both countries suspended the 2018 agreement in which both countries had committed to improving their bilateral relations and actively negotiating in favour of reunification.

Little significant progress was made in implementing the **gender, peace and security agenda** and women's participation in peace processes. The Philippines approved the national action plan on women, peace and security for the period between 2023 and 2033 and two women were elected as representatives to the legislative assembly of the state of Nagaland for the first time. Although women were still excluded from most negotiations, in the peace process between the Philippine government and the NDF, the group's negotiating panel was headed by a woman (Juliet de Lima) and the Norwegian government's facilitation work was led by Kristina Lie Revheim.

4.2 Case study analysis

4.2.1 Asia

East Asia

DPR Korea – Republic of Korea			
Negotiating actors	North Korea, South Korea		
Third parties	--		
Relevant agreements	Relevant agreements	Panmunjom Declaration (April 2018)	

Summary:

Alongside rising tensions between the governments of North Korea and South Korea, not only did they fail to hold any meetings or negotiations, but their diplomatic relations and dialogue on possible reunification and other issues were suspended in 2023. In fact, in his end-of-year speech, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un declared that the relationship between the two Koreas had become one of two hostile and belligerent countries, so his government would no longer seek any kind of dialogue about reunification and reconciliation. Along the same lines, Kim Jong-un said that it made no sense to pursue talks with a country (referring to South Korea) that treated its neighbour as its main enemy and only seeks its collapse and what he called “unification by reabsorption”. In the same speech, Kim Jong-un said that the North Korean Armed Forces would totally annihilate the US and South Korea if Pyongyang were provoked. A few days after his speech, Kim Jong-un also asked the legislative assembly to rewrite North Korea’s Constitution to eliminate the idea of a shared state between two countries divided by war, to define South Korea as North Korea’s “main enemy” and to specify that North Korea will seek to “occupy, subjugate and claim” South Korea as part of North Korean territory if another war breaks out in the Korean Peninsula. Kim Jong-un also ordered the elimination of symbols of inter-Korean reconciliation. For example, he demanded the removal of a monument in honour of the quest for reunification in Pyongyang and the abolition of concepts such as “reunification”, “reconciliation” and “compatriots” from the nation’s history. Along the same lines, North Korea also cut off cross-border railways and abolished government agencies managing relations and dialogue with South Korea, such as the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, the main body for inter-Korean affairs since its creation in 1961, and the National Economic Cooperation Bureau and the Kumgangsán International Tourism Administration, which were responsible for managing joint economic and tourism projects, such as a joint industrial park in the North Korean border city of Kaesong. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the reduction in contacts and relations between both countries and said that dialogue and diplomatic engagement remained the only possible path to sustainable peace and complete and verifiable denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula.

Prior to these words and actions, in late November, **North Korea had backed out of an agreement between both countries signed in 2018** by Kim Jong-un and South Korean President Moo Jae-in at a time of rapprochement between North and South Korea, which coincided with several summits held between Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump. The day before Kim Jong-un decided to end the agreement, the

South Korean government had also partially suspended it and had resumed aerial surveillance along the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) in response to North Korea’s launch of its first military spy satellite into orbit. The 2018 agreement, officially known as the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, was considered the maximum expression of the rapprochement between both countries and the prospects of achieving the reunification and denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula through dialogue. The agreement urged both countries to boost cooperation and dialogue to achieve these ends and advocated the immediate implementation of concrete measures such as the establishment of a joint liaison office with resident representatives of both sides in the Gaeseong region to facilitate dialogue between the authorities, the joint management of humanitarian issues and the programme for reuniting families separated by war (facilitated by the Red Cross), joint participation in international sporting events such as the 2018 Asian Games and the connection and modernisation of railways and border roads. South Korea and North Korea also agreed to transform the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) into a zone of peace, completely ceasing all hostile acts on land, air and sea as of 2 May 2018, design a plan to turn the areas around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea (the de facto and disputed border between both countries) into a maritime zone of peace to avoid accidental military confrontations and guarantee safe fishing activities and periodically hold military meetings at the highest level, including with the defence ministers of both countries. Finally, the 2018 agreement that both countries suspended in November also reaffirmed the Non-Aggression Agreement, which excludes the use of any form of force against each other. It called for disarmament to be carried out gradually, as military tension eased and substantial progress was made in building military confidence. Furthermore, to mark the 65th anniversary of the armistice, South Korea and North Korea agreed to actively hold trilateral meetings with the United States, or quadrilateral meetings with China, aimed at declaring an end to the war and establishing a permanent system of peace on the Korean Peninsula. In this regard, South and North Korea confirmed their common goal of achieving complete denuclearisation and a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula and Seoul explicitly recognised and valued the steps towards denuclearisation being taken by North Korea.

South Asia

India (Assam)	
Negotiating actors	Government, ULFA-PTF, ULFA-I; AANLA, AANLA (FG), BCF, BCF (BT), STF, ACMA, ACMA (FG) and APA
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

The Indian state of Assam has been the focal point of several conflicts and socio-political crises between the Indian government and different armed groups that have demanded Assamese independence or greater recognition for the political and cultural rights of different ethnic minorities. The demographic transformations in the state after the partition of the Indian subcontinent, with the arrival of two million people from Bangladesh, are at the origin of the demands of the population of Assamese ethnic origin for recognition of their cultural, civil and social rights and the creation of an independent state. Violence escalated several times during the 1980s and 1990s and there were failed attempts at negotiations. In 2005, a peace process began with the armed group United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), which was interrupted in 2006, giving rise to a new escalation of the conflict. Since 2011, there has been a significant decrease in violence in the state and many armed groups have handed over their weapons or started talks with the government, including the main insurgent organisation in the state, ULFA, which split as a result of the negotiations since one faction was against them.

Negotiations between the Indian government, the Assam state government and the pro-negotiations faction of the ULFA armed group (ULFA-PTF) progressed during the year, led by its President Arabinda Rajkhowa and its Secretary General Anup Chetia, who has been in charge of the talks. Contacts between this faction and the governments began in 2011. Throughout 2023, discussions were held on a draft agreement that the armed group claimed included various requests that it had presented. The talks were held with government negotiator A K Mishra. In January, he presented a draft agreement that was discussed by a working committee and the Central Committee of the ULFA-PTF. Although details of the content of the agreement under discussion were not revealed, one of the issues addressed in the negotiations was security guarantees for demobilised combatants. In August, a two-day meeting was held between representatives of the Indian government (specifically the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Indian intelligence agency) and a delegation from the ULFA-PTF, made up of Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia and two other leaders of the armed group, Raju Baruah and Sasha Choudhury. The agenda of the negotiations consisted of a 12-point document prepared by the armed group, which contained issues such as safeguarding the political rights of the indigenous population of Assam and issues related to controlling financial resources. It also included the demand for recognition of six communities as “scheduled tribes”: the Moran, Mutock, Tai-Ahom, Koch-rajbongshi, Sootea and Tea tribes, which would grant them a specific protected status. This recognition would mean that half the population of Assam would have tribal recognition. Finally, on December 29, a tripartite agreement was reached between the Indian Government, the Government of the state of Assam and the ULFA-PTF by which the armed group definitively abandoned violence, in exchange for measures relating to the rights of indigenous communities, land reservation

measures, and a financial package for the armed group. Meanwhile, the Indian government announced an initiative to reach out to relatives of members of the ULFA faction opposed to the negotiations, which is headed by Paresch Baruah. This approach, called “From conflict to collaboration: a trust-building initiative for a peaceful future”, included visits to police and military facilities. The Baruah faction refused to start talks, citing the Indian government’s refusal to include the group’s main demand, the sovereignty of Assam, on the negotiating agenda. This ULFA faction is the only armed insurgent group in Assam that is not involved in any negotiating process. **As a result of the agreement signed on September 2022 between the Indian government and eight Adivasi armed groups, 1,182 members of five of these groups (AANLA, ACMA, APA, BCF and STF) surrendered their weapons in July.** The former combatants received a financial benefit in exchange for disarming. In addition, the Adivasi Welfare and Development Council was formed. Also included in the agreement, it was made up of 16 members with a mandate to work to preserve Adivasi identity and culture and the well-being of the indigenous population. The handover of weapons was attended by Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma. Negotiations between these groups and the government had begun in 2012, with an agreement to suspend operations in 2016 and several rounds of negotiations until the 2022 agreement yielded results.

India (Nagaland)	
Negotiating actors	Government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/ NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/ GDRN/NA, ZUF
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Framework agreement (2015)

Summary:

The Indian state of Nagaland has suffered armed conflict and a socio-political crisis since the 1950s as a result of much of the Naga population’s unfulfilled aspiration to win independence and create a sovereign state. There have been different attempts at negotiation since the 1960s, but it was not until 1997 that a ceasefire agreement was reached with the NSCN-IM group, one of the main actors in the conflict. Although the agreement has remained in force to date, the negotiations have not made significant progress on the central issues. In 2012, however, the peace process received a boost from greater involvement from the Naga government and state MPs. Alongside the negotiations with the NSCN-IM, in 2001 the government reached another ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-K insurgent organisation. However, these negotiations have also failed to make significant progress. In 2015, the Government and the NSCN-IM reached a framework pre-agreement, considered a preamble to the final resolution of the conflict. However, that same year, the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-K was broken, and violent clashes began again.

The peace negotiations between the Indian government and the Naga armed group NSCN-IM remained at an impasse. As in previous years, the deadlock was caused by disagreement on the issues of a flag and a Constitution for Nagaland. No progress has been made on either issue, despite the fact that dialogue has remained open between both parties. There were several rounds of talks and informal meetings between the armed group and representatives of the Indian government in Delhi during the year (specifically, in April, August and November), which focused on the flag and the Constitution, but no headway was made that could overcome the impasse. After the last round of negotiations between both parties, which took place in Delhi in November, the armed group declared that the Indian government's refusal to accept these demands was a breach of the framework agreement reached in 2015. Different Naga civil society organisations voiced their discontent about the deadlock in the negotiating process.

Gender, peace and security

For the first time in Nagaland, two women were elected as representatives in the state legislative assembly, after the 33% quota for female candidates was implemented. In the past, opposition to this quota had led to violent protests. The Naga legislative assembly plays an important role in the peace negotiations and its representatives have been actively involved in the process.

South-east Asia

Philippines (MILF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MILF, Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
Third parties	Malaysia, Third Party Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
Relevant agreements	Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities (1997), Agreement on Peace between the Government and the MILF (2001), Mutual Cessation of Hostilities (2003), Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2012), Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2014), Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (2018)

Summary:

Peace negotiations between the Government and the MILF, an MNLF splinter group, started in 1997, just months after Fidel Ramos's Administration had signed a peace agreement with the MNLF. Since then, the negotiating process has been interrupted three times (in 2000, 2003 and 2008) by outbreaks of high intensity violence. Despite this, in the over 30 rounds of talks that have taken place since the late 1990s some agreements on security and development have been reached, as well as a ceasefire agreement that has been upheld, for the most part. In October 2012 both parties signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro

and in March 2014 the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, which plans to replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with a new public body (called Bangsamoro) with a larger territorial scope and broader self-government competences. Since 2014, the peace process has been focused on the drafting and congressional approval of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which incorporates the main contents of the two aforementioned peace agreements and was approved by Congress in 2018. Following its ratification in a plebiscite in early 2019, the peace process has hinged on the implementation of the peace agreements, the institutional development of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (governed temporarily by the leader of the MILF) and the disarmament of the MILF.

During the year the Philippine government, the MILF and the Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, headed by the leader of the MILF, maintained regular contact to continue the implementation of the 2014 peace agreement. **Of particular note is the early July meeting between the Peace Implementation Panels of both sides, the first since Ferdinand Marcos took office as president of the Philippines in June 2022.** During the meeting, both parties repeated their commitment to implementing the agreement and discussed the current status and next steps in various aspects of the agreement, such as the redeployment of the Philippine Armed Forces in Mindanao, the transformation of MILF camps into productive areas, the socio-economic packages for former MILF combatants and the collection of domestic and international funds to accelerate the implementation of the agreement. Furthermore, the Philippine government and the MILF discussed the death of seven MILF members in Maguindanao del Sur in mid-June as part of an operation by state security forces. Both parties welcomed the diligence with which Manila had launched an investigation in this regard, though the MILF denounced that it was an operation not previously communicated or coordinated and was therefore a serious violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement and of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group.

In mid-August, **the third phase of the disarmament and demobilisation of former MILF combatants was completed, which began in 2015 and has affected 26,145 people so far.** The final phase is expected to involve another 14,000 MILF members. The Philippine government, the MILF and the Independent Decommissioning Body, led by Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Suat Akgün, praised the completion of the third phase, though a few days before the MILF had warned that the continuation of the disarmament of combatants largely depended on the progress made in other aspects of the agreement, such as the dismantling of private armed groups, the economic and productive transformation of the six MILF camps, transitional justice and amnesty. Regarding this last issue, in late November a presidential decree was made public granting an amnesty to all MILF combatants who had

committed crimes related to their political beliefs. The MILF, which hailed the order, must channel the requests through the National Amnesty Commission, the body in charge of deciding whether to grant amnesty benefits.

Gender, peace and security

In mid-December, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), the Philippine Commission on Women, UN Women and various national and international women's rights organisations publicly announced the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the period between 2023 and 2033. This is the fourth plan since the first was approved in 2010, in compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which, among other issues, calls for promoting greater female participation in areas such as peace negotiations, conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Several of the authorities who participated in the event to launch the plan highlighted that the Philippines had been one of the pioneer countries in Asia to have an instrument of this type and to address the women, peace and security agenda. The OPAPRU highlighted that the National Plan also addressed emerging realities such as climate action, cybersecurity and maritime security, calling on civil society organisations to support its implementation.

Philippines (MNLF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MNLF (factions led by Nur Misuari and Muslimin Sema)
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	1996 Final Peace Agreement

Summary:

After five years of high intensity armed hostilities between the Government and the MNLF, both parties signed a peace agreement in 1976 in Tripoli under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which, shortly before, had recognized the MNLF as the legitimate representative of the Moro people. However, the unilateral implementation of this agreement by the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marco caused the armed conflict to re-ignite. After the fall of Marcos and the recovery of democracy in 1986, peace negotiations resumed and in 1996 a new peace agreement was reached for the full implementation of the 1976 Tripoli agreement. Nevertheless, both the MNLF and the OIC considered there were substantial elements of the new peace agreement that had not been implemented, so since the year 2007 a tripartite process to revise the peace agreement started. Despite the advances achieved with that process (the so-called '42 points of consensus'), the attack launched by the MNLF on the town of Zamboanga in September 2013, the search and arrest warrant against the founder of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, the criticism by the MNLF of the peace agreement signed by the Government and the MILF in March 2014 and the differing interpretations between the Government and the MNLF on the conclusion or not of the revision of the agreement led the peace negotiations to a standstill at the end of 2013.

With Rodrigo Duterte arriving in power in mid 2016, the conversations resumed with Nur Misuari, who was granted a temporary judicial permit for this purpose. Nevertheless, the majority faction of the MNLF decided to include the main demands of the MNLF in the peace process with the MILF, which led to three of its representatives being included into the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, in charge of drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law (a new political entity foreseen in the 2014 peace agreement with the MILF and which should replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao).

During the year, **the Philippine government entered into negotiations with the two main MNLF factions, mainly in relation to the implementation of the outstanding commitments of the 1996 Peace Agreement, the participation of the MNLF in the government structures of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the reintegration of MNLF fighters.** As for the faction led by the group's founder, Nur Misuari, in September the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) met with the group's vice president, Abdulkarim Tan Misuari, the son of Nur Misuari, and agreed to change the main forum for discussion that existed thus far –the Peace Coordination Committee– into a Peace Implementation Committee. According to the agreement, each panel will have seven members, to which subcommittees will report that deal with socioeconomic issues, transitional justice, security and confidence-building measures. Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity Carlito Galvez said the Marcos government will do everything possible to honour and fulfil the outstanding commitments of the 1996 agreement with the MNLF, identified during a Tripartite Review Process between Manila, the MNLF and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (the OIC, which also facilitated the negotiations that led to the agreement), which culminated in 2016. Historically, the MNLF and Nur Misuari in particular had reproached Manila for not having completed the implementation of the 1996 agreement. This had caused many political disagreements and some major episodes of violence that even led to Nur Misuari's arrest on several occasions. Given this situation, in 2006 the OIC asked the aforementioned Tripartite Review Process to begin to evaluate the implementation of the 1996 agreement and resolve disputes between the Philippine government and the MNLF. During the process, which began in November 2007 and ended in January 2016, the MNLF raised 43 issues of Law 9054, which reorganised the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao based on the provisions of the 1996 agreement that it considered incompatible with the 1996 agreement. Except for one issue on strategic minerals, agreements were reached on the remaining 42 issues. Many of the so-called "42 consensus issues" were included in the Bangsamoro Basic Law (the law that, among other things, created the BARMM), but there were two aspects that the MNLF does not view as properly resolved: the Bangsamoro Development Assistance Fund (BDAF) and the Tripartite Implementation and Monitoring Committee (TIMC).

The day after the agreement with the MNLF faction led by Misuari, the OPAPRU met with the majority faction of the MNLF (the one led by Muslimin Sema, the former mayor of Cotabato and the Minister of Labour and Employment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and it was agreed that **the OPAPRU would facilitate talks to achieve greater convergence between the different factions of the MNLF**. In this sense, it was agreed to create a Joint Executive Committee of the MNLF that will provide guidelines for the aforementioned convergence process. Along the same lines, **the OPAPRU pledged to doing everything possible to get the OIC involved again in implementing the pending commitments of the 1996 peace agreement**. Finally, the MNLF and the Philippine government agreed to transform the current mechanism for dialogue between the parties into a Government-MNLF Coordination and Implementation Committee. On the occasion of this agreement, Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity Carlito Galvez said that the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace agreements is only one of the five points of the Marcos government's Agenda for Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, noting that one of its priorities will be greater unity between the different factions of the MNLF and greater convergence between the peace agreements signed with the MNLF (1996) and the MILF (2014), using the integration of representatives of both organisations in the BARMM Parliament as an example.

Despite their differences, the two main factions of the MNLF agreed with two decisions of the Marcos government. The first was the granting of an amnesty to former MNLF combatants who had committed crimes included in the country's penal code as a consequence of their political convictions on 22 November. The former combatants have two years from the date of the amnesty to submit the corresponding applications and documentation to the National Amnesty Commission. The second was **the launch of the MNLF Transformation Programme on 30 September**, a commitment included in the 1996 agreement. The programme, which began in Basilan, has four major components: security, the socio-economic sphere, transitional justice and confidence-building measures. Around 60 former MNLF combatants passed the case selection process and another 407 did the same by early October.

Philippines (NDF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of various communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political wing of the NPA)
Third parties	Norway
Relevant agreements	The Hague Joint Declaration (1992), Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (1995), Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (1998)

Summary:

Negotiations between the Government and the NDF began in 1986, after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship. Since then, many rounds of negotiations have taken place, but agreement has only been reached on one of the four items listed in the substantive negotiation agenda of The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, namely human rights and international humanitarian law (an agreement was signed in 1998). No agreement has been reached on the other three items: socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and cessation of hostilities and disposition of armed forces. Since 2004, the Government of Norway has been acting as a facilitator between the Government and the NDF, the political organisation that represents the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing (the NPA) in the peace talks. In addition to the significant differences that exist between the Government and the NDF with regard to which socio-economic and political model is best for the Philippines, one of the issues that has generated the greatest controversy between the parties in recent years is that of the security and immunity guarantees for the NDF members involved in the peace negotiations.

Following a six-year hiatus, in November the Philippine government and the NDF signed a joint statement in Oslo promising to resume negotiations to try to put an end to an armed conflict that began in the late 1990s through dialogue and peaceful means. The armed conflict began in the 1960s and is one of the oldest in Asia. The joint statement was signed on 23 November and released on 28 November. Between both dates, **the government announced four presidential proclamations that granted amnesty to the members of four revolutionary organisations**, including the NDF, the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines, in addition to the MILF, the MNLF and the Rebolusyonaryong Partido Manggagawa ng Pilipinas/Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPMP-RPA-ABB). The amnesty covers crimes punishable according to the Penal Code and the special criminal laws prosecuting them for their political convictions. On the same day, an executive order was also made public that expands the functions of the National Amnesty Commission, the body in charge of deciding which cases fall under the amnesty laws. In his second State of the Nation address in July 2023, President Marcos had promised to grant amnesty to combatants who surrendered or turned themselves in.

In the joint statement, both the government and the NDF pledged to seek a peaceful and principled solution to the armed conflict, which they acknowledge has deep political and socio-economic roots. Among other issues, the statement also indicates the need to unite as a nation to urgently confront social and economic problems and external threats to security, an allusion that some analysts attribute to the dispute between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea. Both parties recognised that the framework, times, agenda and priorities of the negotiations are still being discussed and that both the negotiating teams and the more technical task forces have yet to be formed. In a press conference, the Philippine government said that it is not really a

resumption of peace talks, but rather the beginning of a new negotiating process, and that the aforementioned statement did not take effect immediately. Manila did not want to specify deadlines, though it announced that the formal talks would surely begin in the first quarter of 2024. The government also declared that the state security forces and bodies' operations against the NPA would continue. At the end of the year, the Philippine Armed Forces said that the NPA had 20 fronts, some of them very weakened. The main state bodies related somehow with managing the conflict –the Ministry of Defence, the Philippine Armed Forces, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, the National Task Force to end the Local Communist Armed Conflict, National Security Commission (NTC-ELCAC)– approved both the granting of amnesty and the resumption of peace negotiations, though with nuance and reservations. However, **Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte expressed her categorical opposition to the joint statement with the NDF**, which she described as “a deal with the devil”, arguing that the NDF has never been sincere in the different negotiating processes that have taken place in recent decades and pointing out that peace and reconciliation can be negotiated and significant development in the country can be achieved without having to capitulate to the enemies of the state. Duterte also opposed the granting of amnesty to groups she called terrorists, alleging a lack of justice for the victims and their families. In addition to being the highly-popular vice president and the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, some analysts described Duterte's opposition to the negotiating process as significant because she is also the co-vice president of the NTF-ELCAC, an inter-agency body that was primarily responsible for counterinsurgency policy during Rodrigo Duterte's presidency and was repeatedly accused of labelling people critical of the government as insurgents or members of the revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, the NDF praised the resumption of the talks and recalled that **this scenario was set up during a series of informal and confidential meetings facilitated by the government of Norway since 2022, mainly in Norway and the Netherlands**, which is where the NDF's negotiating team has been located for decades. According to some media outlets, one of the meetings that began the process of rebuilding trust between both parties was held between the founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA, Jose Maria Sison, who died in December 2022, and the former chief of the Philippine Armed Forces, Emmanuel Bautista. The interim head of the NDF's negotiating panel, Juliet de Lima (Sison's widow) stressed the importance of addressing one of the country's main problems and one of the factors that caused the armed conflict: the high concentration of land ownership and the lack of land for the peasant population. In response to the government's idea of starting new talks, Juliet de Lima warned that **the negotiating framework agreed upon by both parties**

must be built on the basis of agreements signed in recent decades, mainly the Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, which defines the framework, the principles and the agenda of the negotiations, the agreements on security guarantees and immunity for the NDF's negotiators (1997) and the agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law (1998). The NDF also stressed the importance of resolving some issues before the start of formal negotiations: the general and unconditional release of all political prisoners in the country; the release of the NDF's political consultants so they can participate in the peace negotiations; security guarantees for the NDF's negotiating team; and the removal of the terrorist label from the NDF and some of its prominent leaders and members of the negotiating team. Although Juliet de Lima said that these demands were not preconditions for dialogue, Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity Carlito Gálvez warned that previous negotiating processes made it clear that setting conditions for talks even before they had formally begun posed a threat to building trust and had could derail them. At the end of the year, the NDF also declared that it had yet to discuss the composition of its negotiating team and decide whether or not to announce a ceasefire or a cessation of hostilities for the resumption of the talks.

At the end of the year, the government expressed its displeasure and disappointment about the statement released by the Communist Party of the Philippines to mark the 55th anniversary of its founding that declared the primacy of armed struggle to achieve transformation and said that the peace talks were an additional battlefield for achieving its objectives. The statement also ordered the NPA to strengthen itself and increase its fight against the Philippine state and against US imperialism and the Marcos government. However, the most controversial part of the statement was the Communist Party of the Philippines' announcement of the Third Rectification Movement on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and its basic principles as laid out by Sison, with the aim of overcoming the ideological, political and organisational errors, weaknesses and shortcomings that it had identified in recent years (especially since 2016) and that hindered its growth and the advancement of the revolution. The First Rectification Movement took place in the second half of the 1960s and culminated in the refoundation of the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968, while the Second Rectification Movement took place in the early 1990s.

Gender, peace and security

The current interim president of the NDF negotiating panel is Juliet de Lima, while Coni Ledesma is also involved. Kristina Lie Revheim is the Norwegian government's special envoy to the peace process, who has been facilitating dialogue for years.

Myanmar	
Negotiating actors	Government, armed signatory groups of the cease fire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/ SSA-South, CNF, KNU,KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP and LDU; armed groups not part of the: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA, MNDAA
Third parties	China, ASEAN
Relevant agreements	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (October 2015)

Summary:

Since the armed conflict between the Armed Forces of Myanmar and ethnic-based insurgent groups began in 1948, several negotiations have take place in an attempt to end the violence. Beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, many armed groups have reached ceasefire agreements with the Burmese Government. Although definitive peace agreements were never reached, violence did decrease significantly as a result of these pacts. In 2011 there was a change in the Administration as a result of the 2010 elections and the new Government made several overtures to the armed insurgency that brought about the start of peace negotiations and the signing of agreements with most of the armed groups operating in different parts of the country. By mid-2012 the Government had signed a ceasefire agreement with 12 insurgent organizations. In 2013, talks began with different insurgent groups aimed at reaching a nationwide ceasefire agreement and promoting political talks. In 2015, the government and eight armed opposition groups signed a ceasefire agreement (NCA), taking the first steps towards political dialogue. In 2016, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi convened the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, which brought the government together with the armed opposition groups, beginning a new phase in the peace process. The conference has been convened several times in subsequent years.

There were different forums for dialogue with several of the active insurgent groups in the country during the year and ASEAN's unsuccessful diplomatic attempts at dialogue with the Burmese military regime continued. In December, a ceasefire agreement was reached between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed group MNDAA, a member of the Three Brothers Alliance—made up of the MNDAA (Kokang armed group), the TNLA (Ta'ang armed group) and the AA (Rakhine armed group). Facilitated by China, the ceasefire took place after an unprecedented escalation of armed conflict in northern Shan State, which had put Myanmar's military regime in its most fragile position since the 2021 coup. The violence escalated after the start of Operation 1027 (in reference to the start date of 27 October), after which the armed groups seized important positions, inflicting serious military defeats on the regime and promoting military actions by other insurgent groups in different parts of the country. On 11 December, the MNDAA and the Burmese government agreed to a temporary ceasefire at a meeting in China, which planned the establishment of a safe corridor for civilians and government officials. However, the clashes persisted and escalated, leading to a breakdown in talks between the parties on 23

December. The talks had taken place in the Chinese city of Kunming and followed a visit by Myanmar's foreign minister to Beijing.

Furthermore, Chinese-facilitated meetings between the Myanmar government and other ethnic armed insurgent groups continued on several occasions. There were some meetings with groups that signed the 2015 ceasefire agreement, though these were groups with less operational capacity and no significant agreements were reached with them. During the eighth anniversary of the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement, a ceremony was attended by representatives of some of the groups that signed it.

Finally, there was no progress in meetings between ASEAN and the Burmese government following the political crisis resulting from the 2021 military coup d'état. In fact, some disagreements arose between ASEAN members on how to conduct the relationship with Myanmar. Although the members of the Asian organisation reaffirmed their commitment to the Five-Point Consensus established after the coup d'état, the governments held different positions. Thailand promoted greater rapprochement with the Burmese military junta, though this position was criticised for breaking the consensus among the Asian countries that make up the organisation. In fact, Thailand's foreign minister visited former State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi in prison. In September, ASEAN countries agreed on a new mechanism to address the situation in Myanmar through a troika made up of the current, former and future presidents of the organisation. It was also decided that Myanmar would not be able to hold the regional presidency in 2026 and calls were repeated to end the violence in the country and find a lasting and sustainable solution to its situation. ASEAN also called for an end to attacks against civilians, homes and civilian infrastructure, such as educational, health and religious centres. In November, the government of Indonesia, which held the ASEAN presidency at the time, said it had held meetings with different important actors in Myanmar to promote the Five-Point Consensus, including representatives of the National Unity Government (NUG), the government-in-exile formed after the coup d'état and ethnic resistance forces. The government of Myanmar was represented by "interlocutors", as stated in the subsequent statement, without specifying their identity. In fact, the NUG indicated that it was not involved in talks with the military government.

Thailand (south)	
Negotiating actors	Government, BRN
Third parties	Malaysia
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

Since 2004, the year when the armed conflict in the south of Thailand reignited, several discreet and exploratory informal conversations have taken place between the Thai government and the insurgent group. Some of these dialogue initiatives have been led by non-government organizations, by the Indonesian government or by former senior officials of the Thai State. After around one year of exploratory contacts between the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and some insurgent groups, at the start of 2013, formal and public conversations started between the Government and the armed group BRN, facilitated by the Government of Malaysia. These negotiations were interrupted by the coup d'état in March 2014, but the military government in power since then resumed its contacts with several insurgent groups towards the second half of the year. In 2015 negotiations between the Government and MARA Patani –an organization grouping the main insurgent groups in the south of the country– were made public. Although the insurgency wanted to discuss measures that might resolve the central points of the conflict (such as recognizing the distinct identity of the Patani people or granting some level of self-government to the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat), the main point discussed during the initial stages of the process was the establishment of several security areas to reduce the level of violence and thus determine the level of representativeness of MARA Patani and the commitment of insurgent groups (especially the BRN) with the process of dialogue.

Though high levels of violence continued to be reported in the south of the country and the peace negotiations between the government and the BRN remained inactive for much of the year, **significant headway was made in the negotiations between both parties, such as the appointment of a new facilitator by Malaysia, the appointment of a new negotiating panel by the new government of Thailand, the signing of a shared road map between both parties and the BRN's acceptance that other armed groups may participate in the negotiating process.** On 10 January, the government of Malaysia announced the appointment of General Zulfiki Zainal Abidin, the former head of the Malaysian Armed Forces, to replace Abdul Rahim Noor, effective 1 January. In early February, Zulfiki Zainal Abidin met with the government's negotiating panel led by General Wanlop Rugsanaoh in Bangkok. A few days later, on 20 February, the sixth round of negotiations of the Peace Dialogue Process on Southern Thailand began in Malaysia. In this meeting, which lasted two days, **both parties agreed on the Joint Comprehensive Plan toward Peace, a kind of shared road map that should be implemented in 2023 and 2024.** In a joint press conference with both negotiating teams, Zulfiki Zainal Abidin announced that the details of the agreement would continue to be worked on over the course of several technical meetings between the parties from March to May. The facilitator of the negotiating process also revealed that **the BRN would accept the participation of other armed groups operating in the south of the country** in the peace talks, though without offering names or dates in this regard. A few days before the sixth round of negotiations, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim had visited Thailand and declared that he would do

everything in his power to achieve a solution to the armed conflict and that Malaysia would not accept the use of violence to resolve it. Some media outlets interpreted his statement as a warning to both the government of Thailand and the BRN. Though many analysts said that the Joint Comprehensive Plan towards Peace could be an important turning point in the process, no meetings took place or were made public in the months after it was signed, nor was any substantial progress made in the negotiations. In fact, in March the BRN publicly announced that it was temporarily suspending its participation in the negotiations until a new government emerged from the elections in May.

The leader of the party that won the elections (Move Forward) had declared that if he managed to form a government, the negotiating process would be led by civilians (the last three heads of the government's negotiating team have been military men), who would take human rights in the region more into account, thereby promoting a more inclusive and participatory peace process that would prioritise the principle of coexistence in a multicultural society. However, even though Move Forward obtained the support of eight parties to achieve a parliamentary majority, their total number of seats did not add up to a sufficient majority to form a government. Finally, after an impasse of more than three months, the leader of the opposition party Pheu Thai (which finished second in the May elections) was sworn in as prime minister after managing to forge a coalition of 11 parties. On the same day that Srettha Thavisin was sworn in as prime minister, the former prime minister and founder and de facto leader of Pheu Thai, Thaksin Shinawatra, returned to Thailand after spending 15 years in exile to evade several pending criminal charges. Thaksin was deposed in a coup d'état in 2006, and it was under his administration that the conflict in the Muslim-majority southern provinces escalated to unprecedented levels in previous decades. Some civil society organisations in southern Thailand lamented Srettha and his government's apparent lack of interest in moving forward in the peace negotiations, criticising the new authorities in Bangkok for their fear of internationalising the resolution of the conflict. Finally, **after months of uncertainty about the future of the peace negotiations, in late November the Thai government appointed Chatchai Bangchud as head of the new government negotiating team,** which would also be made up of the Thai Army Commander for the Southern Region, the General Director of Civil Affairs of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. Chatchai, who is the first civilian to serve in the role, was previously the Undersecretary-General of the National Security Council. He has been involved in the negotiating process since before Malaysia took over dialogue facilitation efforts in 2013 and has recently been the main collaborator of the government's main negotiator until then, General Wanlop Rugsanaoh. In December, Chatchai Bangchud travelled to Malaysia to meet with the dialogue facilitation team. According to

several media reports, some of the team's new priorities will include reducing violence (and especially an end of hostilities during Ramadan, which happened in 2022) and greater inclusivity and participation in the process. According to some, in January 2024 a working committee of the negotiating team will begin consultations with various actors in the south of the country. Also in December, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim met in a Thai town near the border with the Thai Prime Minister and asserted that the Thai Prime Minister had the political will to resolve the conflict in southern Thailand.

Gender, peace and security

In late May, as part of a project funded by the Peacemakers Network's Asia Working Group, 25 Muslim and Buddhist women met in Pattani to participate in a workshop on inclusive dialogue and to study the challenges and difficulties of the peace process between the Thai government and the BRN.

4.2.2 The Pacific

Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Papua New Guinea, government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville
Third parties	United Nations
Relevant agreements	Bougainville Peace Agreement (2001)

Summary:

The armed conflict between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (1988-1998), which some sources consider to have been the deadliest in Oceania since the Second World War, ended with a cessation of hostilities in 1998 and the signing of a peace agreement in 2001 in Arawa (the largest city in Bougainville). Among other matters, the agreement provided for the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB), the disarmament and demobilisation of combatants and the holding of a non-binding independence referendum within a maximum period of 15 years after the election of the first ARB government, which finally took place in 2005. After several years of negotiations between the national and regional governments, in 2018 the Agreement's Joint Supervisory Body created the Post-Referendum Planning Working Group and former Irish President Bertie Ahern was elected chair of the Bougainville Referendum Commission, making him responsible for preparing the census and other logistical preparations for the referendum. After several delays, the referendum was finally held between 23 November and 7 December 2019, with a binary question in which voters could choose between greater autonomy or independence for the region.

Not only were there no significant agreements or progress in the talks between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government on the political status of Bougainville in 2023, but there were major disagreements between

both parties regarding procedural and substantive issues in the process at various times during the year. One of the main conflicts between the parties occurred in June, after Minister for Bougainville Affairs Manasseh Makiba declared before the national Parliament that the vote on the independence of Bougainville would require a two-thirds majority (and not a simple majority), with the understanding that an issue of such impact that affects the sovereignty of the country would require amendment of the Constitution. Makiba also said that both the Constitution and the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement provide for the national Parliament to decide on how to interpret the results of the 2019 Bougainville independence referendum (97.7% voted in favour of independence) and, ultimately, on the political status of Bougainville. In this sense, Makiba said that if certain leaders did not agree with the ratification process proposed to the national Parliament, they could raise the issue before the Supreme Court so it could hand down its verdict on the matter. The Autonomous Bougainville Government, and particularly its Minister for Independence Mission Implementation, Ezekiel Massat, protested angrily, arguing that the government was trying to unilaterally change an issue (that of the necessary majority in Parliament) that had already been previously agreed upon by both governments. As such, Massat said that **the national government was placing as many obstacles as possible in Bougainville's path to independence and warned that the Autonomous Bougainville Government no longer had any confidence in being able to achieve independence under the government of James Marape.**

Faced with such a crisis, the sole meeting all year of the Joint Supervisory Body, led by Prime Minister James Marape and the Autonomous Bougainville Government's President Ishmael Toroama, was held in Port Moresby in late July. Some important agreements were made during the meeting: the motion to be submitted to Parliament would have to be approved by a simple majority (and not a qualified majority, as Massat had suggested), Toroama and other members of the Autonomous Bougainville Government would be invited to do awareness-raising and political advocacy work before members of the national Parliament and a third party could possibly be designated to facilitate the talks between both governments and to help to resolve disputes that may arise during them.

Despite the importance of such a meeting, protests by the Autonomous Bougainville Government continued during the second half of the year. In September, for example, the Autonomous Bougainville Government voiced its firm opposition to making the vote in the national Parliament on the independence of Bougainville secret, or to having such a decision taken in two or more parliamentary sessions, arguing that such a format could delay the timing agreed upon by both parties. In April 2022, the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville had reached an agreement (called the Era

Kone Covenant on the Finalisation of the Bougainville Referendum) according to which the results of the 2019 referendum and the conclusions and agreements of the consultations and negotiations that the two parties have maintained since then should be presented to the Parliament of Papua New Guinea before the end of 2023. This commitment was ratified by the national government several times during 2023, but by the end of December it had not been fulfilled. In December, tension between both governments rose again after Minister for Bougainville Affairs Manasseh Makiba said that the results of the 2019 referendum were not binding, that the Parliament of Papua New Guinea was the only authority with the capacity to decide on the political status of Bougainville and that the 2019 independence referendum was unique because its implementation was contained in a peace agreement (from 2001) and was not related to a decolonisation process, separating it completely from other geographically close cases, such

as New Caledonia and West Papua. **The Autonomous Bougainville Government noted that nowhere in the 2001 peace agreement or in Papua New Guinea's legal system does it stipulate that the referendum is not binding** and regretted that, at the end of the year, there had still been no response to a letter from Toroama to Marape requesting the appointment of an independent mediator who could facilitate the talks and resolution of the disputes between both governments.

Gender, peace and security

Francesca Riana Semoso became the third woman to win a seat in the Parliament of Papua New Guinea (and the first woman originally from Bougainville) when she won a seat for North Bougainville in the legislative by-elections held in late October. Semoso had already held a seat in the Bougainville Parliament on two previous occasions.

5. Peace negotiations in Europe

- In 2023, six of the 45 peace processes in the world (13%) took place in Europe.
- In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that broke down in April 2022 and talks only continued on limited matters.
- An Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh forced almost its entire population to flee and the enclave was reintegrated by force into Azerbaijan.
- Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo.
- In most of the negotiating processes in the region, women's organisations and female activists and experts demanded and recommended women's greater participation in dialogue mechanisms, in the face of long-stalled processes and the deteriorating regional geopolitical context.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2023. Firstly, the main characteristics and general trends on the dialogue processes in the region are presented, followed by the analysis on the evolution of each specific context during the year, including in relation to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Europe that hosted peace negotiations during 2023.

Table 2.1. Summary of the peace processes and negotiations in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, representatives of self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh	EU, USA, Russia, Iran, Türkiye, Georgia ¹
Cyprus	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	UN, EU, Guarantor Countries (Türkiye, Greece and United Kingdom)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ²	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ³
Moldova (Transnistria)	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA, EU ⁴
Russia – Ukraine	Russia, Ukraine	UN, Türkiye, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, ICRC, IAEA, Vatican City, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia ⁵
Serbia – Kosovo	Serbia, Kosovo	EU, UN, USA, Germany, France, Italy

1 Iran and Türkiye are included in this table due to their participation in the 3+3 regional platform. This platform was launched in 2021 at Türkiye's behest with the stated objective of promoting peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It brings together Türkiye, Russia, Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though invited, Georgia has not yet participated in this format. In 2020, Russia and Türkiye established a joint monitoring centre for the 2020 ceasefire. However, the status of Türkiye and the 3+3 platform as third parties may be subject to different interpretations. Since 2023, the OSCE Minsk Group has not been included in this table as it has become inoperative. It was co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States; the rest of its permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Türkiye. On the other hand, Georgia is included in this table because it facilitated dialogue between the parties in conflict in 2023.

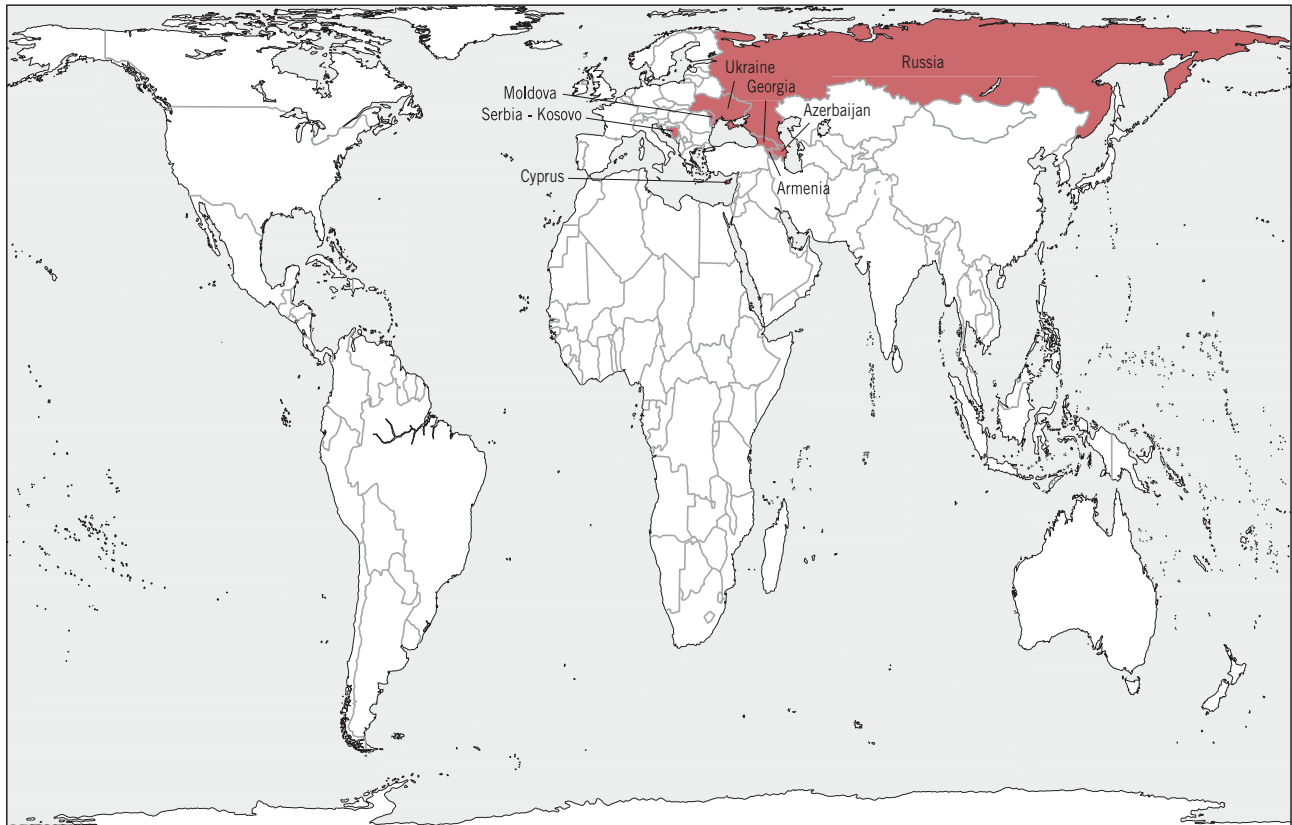
2 Russia's status in the Georgian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

3 Ibid.

4 In 2023, the 5+2 conference format remained inactive. In the 5+2 conference the OSCE was a mediator, Ukraine and Russia were mediators-guarantors, and the US and the EU were observers. The OSCE-facilitated 1+1 format was active and was also attended by participants of the 5+2 format.

5 This table includes actors playing roles of mediation/facilitation and support in any of the areas of dialogue active between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. They are included regardless of the frequency or scope of their involvement. In 2022, the actors playing some role included in this table were: Türkiye, the UN, Israel, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the IAEA, the OSCE, Germany and France. Beyond the actors listed in this table, this chapter analyses and includes other actors that promoted dialogue during the year and are not considered third parties in this yearbook.

Map 5.1. Peace negotiations in Europe in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2023⁶

5.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

This chapter analyses six peace processes that took place in Europe in 2023 and that account for 13% of all peace processes worldwide in the last year. However, of those six, the case of Russia-Ukraine only covered negotiations between the parties in limited areas in 2023, such as humanitarian issues, as well as dialogue between Ukraine and international actors for the rollout of the Ukraine's Peace Formula and peace initiatives of various governments. Moscow and Kyiv did not resume the political-military negotiations in 2023 that had broken off the previous year. The other armed conflict in Europe, which has pitted Türkiye against the PKK since 1984, continued without a negotiating process. In February 2023, the PKK announced a temporary "period of inaction" due to the earthquake that rocked southeastern Türkiye and Syria. This cessation of hostilities was extended until the Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections in May, and it ended in June. Türkiye did not reciprocate in the truce. The lack of a negotiating process was especially alarming in the

context of continuing violence between Türkiye and the PKK and escalating conflicts and tension in the Middle East, including hostilities between Türkiye and Kurdish forces in Syria.⁷ The other five negotiating processes dealt with socio-political crises of varying intensity: Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Cyprus and Serbia – Kosovo.

In all the processes analysed, at least one of the **negotiating actors** was the government of a country involved in the conflict. At the same time, in all processes except for Russia – Ukraine, one of the parties was a self-proclaimed state, though only Kosovo enjoyed broad international recognition as such.⁸ However, regarding the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), communication between representatives of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh yielded no results in 2023 and the Azerbaijani military offensive dismantled the self-proclaimed republic and provoked the exodus of its Armenian population. As a result, the negotiations were limited to Azerbaijan and Armenia regarding the normalisation of relations,

6 Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian talks, Ukraine's dialogue with international actors on parts of its Peace Formula and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

7 See the summary on Türkiye in the chapter on armed conflicts in the Middle East in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

8 Around 100 countries have recognised Kosovo as an independent state. In 2010, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion establishing that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence did not violate international law.

deepening the trend since the 2020 war. The weight, interests and agendas of regional and international actors became evident in the dynamics of various disputes and negotiating processes and perspectives in Europe, such as Türkiye's influence over the Turkish Cypriot Republic and Russia's influence over Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestria. The dynamics of continental and global confrontation between Russia and the West were projected on the processes in the region in different ways.

Third parties were involved in all the processes in the region, playing supportive roles that included mediation and facilitation. Greater third-party involvement and fragmentation was identified in 2023, partly linked to regional and global geostrategic divisions that had intensified since the war in Ukraine, and to external parties' own strategic interests. This was true of the negotiating process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the regional powers of Türkiye, Iran and Russia wielded influence in the 3+3 format. Individually, Georgia carried out dialogue initiatives to bring the parties together. Azerbaijan was averse to the role of Western third parties. Russia, Türkiye and Iran, that were participants in the 3+3 format, were also opposed to the involvement of Western actors as third parties. In 2023, the EU established a new civilian observation mission on the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan (EUMA), replacing EUMCAP. In the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo, Italy joined the EU, the US, France and Germany in conducting facilitation work in 2023 in a context in which Euro-Atlantic actors were trying to promote a normalisation agreement between the parties, spurred on by the deteriorating geopolitical scenario in Europe and the resulting challenges in the Western Balkans. This multiplicity of actors was also visible in the complex process scheme between Russia and Ukraine, which did not resume their political-military negotiations, yet held direct and indirect talks in limited areas, with support from the UN, Türkiye, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Switzerland), the ICRC, Vatican City, Qatar, the UAE and the IAEA. Ukraine also discussed and negotiated with international partners and actors over parts of its Peace Formula, such as security guarantees. Though not considered third parties, various countries and actors became involved in initiatives to support the search for solutions.

In some cases, greater regional and global polarisation shrank the space for third parties. The 5+2 format of negotiations between Moldova and Transdniestria (which involved the parties to the conflict, the OSCE as mediator, Ukraine and Russia as mediators and guarantors and the US and the EU as observers), remained inactive due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. The OSCE continued to mediate the 1+1 negotiations in this process and the participants of the 5+2 format attended some of these meetings during 2023, but the platform was not formally resumed. Due to the regional polarisation, Russia opposed the one-

year renewal of the OSCE mission in Moldova, as it did in 2022, so only successive six-month extensions were possible. Disagreements were also visible between Armenia and Azerbaijan over third-party involvement in their peace process. Integration processes and relations with the EU also became more important in 2023, with questions raised about their potential future impact on the negotiating processes and the respective contexts, as well as about the EU's role in the negotiations, in a scenario marked by projected geostrategic confrontation. Another feature related to third parties in 2023 was the uncertainty about the US presidential election scheduled for 2024 and its potential impact on Washington's approach to negotiating processes in the region, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine.

***Peace processes
in Europe in 2023
accounted for 13% of
all cases worldwide***

In terms of the third-party involvement of intergovernmental organisations, the UN played prominent roles as a mediator, co-mediator and co-facilitator in three negotiating processes (Cyprus, Russia – Ukraine (in relation to the negotiations over grain exports) and Georgia, respectively) and a lesser role through the UNMIK mission in Kosovo. The OSCE remained the main mediator in Moldova and a co-mediator in Georgia. However, the OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by the US, France and Russia) remained inoperative as a co-mediator in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to the dynamics since the 2020 war and the confrontation between the Euro-Atlantic countries and Russia. The EU was a mediator in the negotiating processes between Kosovo and Serbia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan and a co-facilitator in the negotiating process involving Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia. It was also an “interested party” in the Cypriot peace process and an observer in Moldova's 5+2 format, though it remained inactive.

The **negotiating agendas** were varied, reflecting both the specific characteristics of each process and the type of actors and specific demands of each. The issues on the negotiating agendas were diverse and the details on the various elements and status of discussions of each round were not always public. Regarding the **use of force and ceasefires**, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh reached a cessation of hostilities agreement in September under the terms imposed by Baku with its military offensive. The negotiating process between Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia continued for another year, addressing issues such as the non-use of force, though the parties could not come to an agreement. Russia and Ukraine did not engage in ceasefire negotiations. Ukraine demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops as a precondition for negotiating any cessation of hostilities. Russia breached its unilateral Orthodox Christmas truce, described Ukraine's Peace Formula as unviable and continued to demand recognition of the annexed territories.

Other items on the agendas included the **normalisation of relations**, such as between Armenia and Azerbaijan

and between Serbia and Kosovo, with different areas covered under that umbrella, such as the demarcation of the border in the dialogue between Yerevan and Baku and the status of Serbian-majority areas in Kosovo and the recognition of symbols and documents in the process between Belgrade and Pristina. On the other hand, the issue of the **status of the various disputed territories**, one of the root causes of many conflicts in Europe, continued to be absent or blocked in the negotiating processes. Negotiations at the highest level did not resume in Cyprus in 2023 due to disagreements over the framework for a solution (a bicomunal and bizonal federation or a two-state model), though talks did continue through the joint technical committees and other forums. Azerbaijan forcibly dismantled the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and reintegrated it into its territory. The negotiating process in Georgia only covered security and humanitarian issues, without addressing the disputed status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moldova and Transdniestria addressed many different issues, such as guarantees for the negotiating parties, human rights, freedom of movement, the importation of basic goods, access to land and vehicle registration. Several negotiating processes dealt with **humanitarian issues**. For example, Russia and Ukraine held talks on exchanging prisoners and repatriating the dead, and to a lesser extent on the return of minors forcibly deported to Russia or areas under occupation. They also negotiated over the export of grain, other food products and fertilisers, though the agreement reached in 2022 and renewed several times, including in 2023, expired for good in July 2023, due to Russia's rejection.

In terms of **trends**, 2023 was a year of setbacks, impasse and uncertainty. There was a great setback when Azerbaijan's military offensive eliminated the option of a negotiated solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, forced the exodus of the Armenian population from the enclave, worsened traumatic impacts on the population and added a new regional and global benchmark for the use of force to settle disputes. The negotiating processes in Moldova and Georgia remained deadlocked, but in contexts of greater fragility and uncertainty due to the projection of regional and global geopolitical confrontation. The negotiating process in Cyprus remained at a standstill, with great uncertainty about the prospects for resuming. The context of the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo deteriorated seriously and it faced great problems during the year as a whole despite some progress being made in the first few months of 2023. The political and military negotiations between Russia and Ukraine that were suspended in 2022 were not resumed and the prospects for this crisis were uncertain, with stagnation on the military front lines, serious tolls of victims and multidimensional damage.

Regarding **participation and inclusivity**, the negotiating processes in Europe lacked formats for the direct formal participation of the civilian population. Civil society actors carried out initiatives and made calls for dialogue during the year, such as in Cyprus and Kosovo, and were involved in providing mutual support and humanitarian aid, like in Ukraine and Armenia. For example, in October around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo jointly called for peacebuilding, normalising relations in the region and building links and cooperation within and between Kosovo and Serbia. Some third-party actors supported confidence-building initiatives. In Moldova, the OSCE facilitated dialogue-related activities between parts of the population on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River. The UN Secretary-General said that the UN mission in Kosovo would prioritise confidence-building initiatives and intercommunity exchanges, given the deteriorating situation. Organised civil society actors faced persecution and repression in various contexts. As part of this, authorities in Russia and Azerbaijan detained anti-war activists.

Regarding the **gender** perspective, the peace processes in Europe continued to be characterised mainly by low levels of women's participation in the negotiating teams, as well as by the lack of gender mechanisms or gender architecture and lack of integration of the gender perspective in formal processes. Only the negotiating process in Cyprus had a gender-specific mechanism in the formal negotiating process, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality. Some complained during the year about the lack of implementation of the action plan adopted by the gender equality committee in 2022 in Cyprus and identified obstacles like the lack of accountability mechanisms for compliance with the plan and other issues.⁹ In Moldova, the Informal Women's Advisory Council was constituted in late 2022. Established by UN Women, it aimed to bring women's voices and perspectives to the negotiating process. It had 14 civil society experts and representatives: seven from the right bank of the Dniester/Nistru River and seven from the left. In 2023 this new forum held various meetings and sessions during the year, including the identification of the collective and personal security needs of women and girls on both sides of the conflict line. However, there were no meetings between the OSCE, a mediating actor in the process, and the Informal Women's Advisory Council in 2023. The government of Moldova approved its second national action plan on women, peace and security (2023-2027) in 2023. With support from UN Women, government representatives participating in the negotiating process in Georgia continued to hold meetings with civil society representatives, including women's organisations and displaced women, to exchange information and generate dialogue. In previous years, however, women from Georgian civil

9 See the case of Cyprus in this chapter.

society had identified gender limitations to the formal negotiating process involving Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia.¹⁰ In various contexts, women's organisations and activists engaged in confidence-building initiatives, calls for dialogue and demands for greater female participation in peace processes, like in Serbia and Kosovo and Cyprus. In 2023, the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC) published a study that analysed points of concern in conflicts in the region and positive and negative trends in conflict resolution, among other issues.

Finally, even though they are not covered in this yearbook because they are not considered peace processes, various types of other conflict situations in Europe were the scene of political dialogue or calls for dialogue. Türkiye and Cyprus achieved a certain degree of rapprochement in 2023. In December Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Greece for the first time since 2017 and met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis as part of the Greece-Türkiye High-level Cooperation Council. Both signed a non-binding 10-point declaration to pursue “good neighbourly relations” in which they committed to keeping communication channels open, carrying out military-related confidence-building activities and boosting trade, according to media reports. According to media outlets, they did not address disputed issues such as the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone of Greece, which Athens said could be addressed in subsequent talks.

As part of negotiations for the investiture of the new Spanish government, various agreements were reached to create several dialogue tables regarding the conflict over the status of Catalonia in 2023. The PSOE, the main party of the coalition government, and ERC, the Catalan independence party which governs Catalonia, agreed on plans to promote institutional talks between the Spanish and Catalan governments through a forum for dialogue created in 2020 and to create another space for negotiations between the two parties. Meanwhile, the PSOE and Junts, the main opposition Catalan independence party in Catalonia, agreed to create a forum for dialogue between both parties. For both forums (the one for the PSOE and ERC and the one for the PSOE and Junts), the parties agreed to designate support and verification mechanisms, which would be international for the latter. The Catalan parties' forum in the Catalan Parliament remained inactive, though at the end of the year the Catalan president said he intended to convene the forum to open the discussion there on a clarity agreement to resolve the conflict. In October, a group of experts presented the results of a report commissioned by the Catalan government on this agreement, called the Clarity Agreement, which proposed five possible agreed referenda. At the end of the year,

the parties' forum showed no signs of convening. As a result of the investiture deals, in November the PSOE proposed a draft organic amnesty law that provides for annulling the judicial procedures and penalties linked to the pro-independence events that occurred between January 2012 and November 2023. The law was admitted for processing.

5.2. Case study analysis

Eastern Europe

Moldova (Transdniestria)	
Negotiating actors	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria
Third parties	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA, EU ¹¹
Relevant agreements	Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova (1992), Memorandum on the Bases for Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transdniestria (The Moscow Agreement) (1997)

Summary:

Transdniestria is a 4,000 km² enclave with half a million inhabitants that are mostly Russian-speaking. Legally under Moldovan sovereignty, but with de facto independence, since the 1990s it has been the stage for an unresolved dispute regarding its status. The conflict surfaced during the final stages of the breakup of the USSR, when fears increased in Transdniestria over a possible unification between the independent Moldova and Romania, which have both historical and cultural links. Transdniestria rejected Moldovan sovereignty and declared itself independent. This sparked an escalation in the number of incidents, which eventually became an armed conflict in 1992. A ceasefire agreement that same year brought the war to an end and gave way to a peace process under international mediation. One of the main issues is the status of the territory. Moldova defends its territorial integrity, but is willing to accept a special status for the entity, while Transdniestria has fluctuated between proposals for a confederalist model that would give the area broad powers and demands for full independence. Other points of friction in the negotiations include cultural and socio-economic issues and Russian military presence in Transdniestria. Since the beginning of the dispute there have been several proposals, partial agreements, commitments and confidence-building measures in the framework of the peace process, as well as important obstacles and periods of stagnation. Geostrategic international disputes also hover over this unresolved conflict, which has deteriorated due to the war in Ukraine.

The talks remained active only at the 1+1 level of political representatives and joint working groups. As a whole, the negotiating process underwent a period of uncertainty about its future direction, put in a different context than previous stages due to various factors.

¹⁰ See the case of Georgia in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

¹¹ In 2023, the 5+2 conference format remained inactive, in which the OSCE was a mediator, Ukraine and Russia were mediators-guarantors, and the US and the EU were observers. The OSCE-facilitated 1+1 format was active and was also attended by participants in the 5+2 format.

These factors included the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2022 and the escalating tension between Moldova and Russia, including allegations of Russian plans to overthrow the Moldovan government and destabilise the country in February 2023 and the process to integrate Moldova into the EU, with candidate country status from June 2022 and the opening of negotiations in December 2023. The main negotiating architecture of the process, the 5+2 format (Moldova, Transdniestria, the OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, the US and the EU) continued without meeting. **The Moldovan negotiator and Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Oleg Serebrian pointed out that this format was no longer active, considering its work cancelled by the war in Ukraine, and said that it could only be resumed with the normalisation of relations between Russia and Ukraine.** In the presentation of the new government's priorities in February, new Prime Minister Dorin Recean mentioned the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transdniestria and the demilitarisation of the strip. According to analysts, other priorities for the government included the search for a diplomatic solution that would restore full Moldovan sovereignty over Transdniestria, as well as the continuation of the 1+1 dialogue with Transdniestria on economic and technical issues, the bilateral talks with each of the actors of the 5+2 format and the promotion of freedom of movement between both sides of the Dniester River in the transitional period.¹²

During the year, Moldova highlighted Law No. 173-XVI of 22 July 2005 about basic provisions of the special legal status of settlements on the left bank of the Dniester (Transdniestria) as a framework for resolving the status of Transdniestria.

In November, Serebrian said that some aspects of this law could be revised, but that it contained the main lines and that any action regarding the status of Transdniestria would have to comply with its provisions. According to analysts, this law treats Transdniestria as a sum of settlements and not as an entity in itself and envisions a status compatible with the Constitution of Moldova, with legislative and executive powers to be negotiated between the parties and with international guarantees.¹³ Serebrian cited the importance of any future status guaranteeing that Moldova remains a sovereign state and offered the Kozak Memorandum as an example to avoid—a draft resolution prepared by Russia in 2003 that provided for an asymmetric federation and Russian troops stationed during a transitional period that Moldova rejected at the time. During the year, Moldovan President Maria Sandu defended the option that Moldova can enter the EU in two

phases: first the territory under the control of Moldova, followed by Transdniestria, in case reunification is not achieved before. Overall, the EU integration process placed the enclave in the position of having to decide which scenario to pursue.¹⁴ Transdniestria already had a high degree of commercial integration with the EU, with extensive work and family ties with Moldova and most of its population holding Moldovan passports, though it maintained its political orientation and cultural ties with Russia, and 1,500 Russian troops in its territory.¹⁵ **Transdniestria and Russia demanded the restart of negotiations in the 5+2 format during the year.**

In this new geopolitical context, dialogue between the parties in conflict was limited during the year to the 1+1 level and joint working groups. At the 1+1 level, meetings took place between the main negotiators of Moldova and Transdniestria, Oleg Serebrian and Vitaly Ignatiev, and were facilitated by the OSCE. At the meeting on 17 February, held at the mission office in Tiraspol, the delegations addressed the reform of the penal code that criminalises separatism, individual human rights cases, the freedom of movement and the import of basic goods, according to the OSCE. In February 2023, Moldova had approved changes to the criminal code that provide for punishing the funding and incitement of separatism and conspiracy against Moldova. Serebrian said that the changes would not hinder the negotiating process, but the Transdniestrian authorities complained of a lack of guarantees. At the 1+1 meeting on 20 June, held at the mission headquarters in Bender, which was also attended by representatives of the mediators and observers of the 5+2 format, **Transdniestria again raised the issue of the lack of guarantees since the**

reform of the criminal code and proposed restoring the 2019 mechanism of guarantees created by the OSCE mission. The conflict parties also addressed other issues such as freedom of movement, human rights, access to Dubasari agricultural land, vehicle registration and the import of medical equipment to Transdniestria, according to the OSCE. There were also diplomatic efforts made and separate meetings held by actors such as EUBAM and the OSCE. Throughout the year, the OSCE mission facilitated dialogue between parts of the population on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River. As in 2022, **Russia opposed the one-year renewal of the OSCE mission, so its extension was only possible for six months (in June and again in December, until 30 June 2024).** Moscow warned that the future of the mission would be subject to progress in the 5+2 format.

The 5+2 negotiating format on the conflict between Moldova and Transdniestria remained inactive, influenced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine

12 Socor, Vladimir, "Moldova Extricates From Russian-Dominated Process of Negotiations on Transnistria (Part One)", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 20, No. 33.

13 Douglas, Nadja and Stefan Wolff, "Confidence Building in the Shadow of War: Moldova, Transdniestria, and the Uncertain Future of the 5+2 Process" in Friesendorf, Cornelius and Argyro Kartsonaki, *OSCE Insights 2023*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2024.

14 Pleșca, Laurențiu and Lucas Dastros-Pitei, "Why Transnistria's future depends on the war in Ukraine", *LSE Blog of EUROPP*, LSE, 27 September 2023.

15 De Waal, Thomas, "A Fragile Stability in Moldova", *Carnegie Europe*, 10 May 2022.

Gender, peace and security

Since October 2022, the negotiating process in Moldova has had a Women's Advisory Board on Sustainable Peacebuilding (WAB), an informal body established by UN Women. The body had 14 experts and civil society representatives, including seven from the right bank of the Dniester/Nistru River and seven from the left. According to UN Women, the main objective was to bring women's voices and perspectives to the negotiating process. In 2023, its members carried out various joint work and training sessions. At the joint working session in October, they approved positioning documents and identified group and individual security needs for women and girls on both sides of the Dniester River, according to UN Women. There were no meetings between the OSCE and the WAB in 2023.

The 1+1 level of the negotiations was led by two men, Oleg Serebrian and Vitaly Ignatiev, while the meetings were facilitated by the OSCE's head of mission, American diplomat Kelly Keiderling, who was appointed to the office in October 2022. In February 2023, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Bujar Osmani visited Moldova and met with the leaders and negotiators of Moldova and Transdnistria, as well as with civil society members from both sides, including women, to address their role in promoting confidence-building and with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's special representative on gender, Liliana Palihovici, as reported by the OSCE. There were no subsequent follow-up meetings. In March 2023, the government of Moldova approved its second national action plan on women, peace and security (2023-2027).¹⁶

Russia – Ukraine	
Negotiating actors	Russia, Ukraine
Third parties	UN, Türkiye, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, ICRC, IAEA, Vatican City, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia ¹⁷
Relevant agreements	Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (22th July 2022)

Summary:

Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, resulting in the military occupation of southern and eastern parts of the country and affecting other areas with bombings

and attacks that had serious impacts on human security, such as mass forced displacement, extrajudicial executions, disappearances, sexual violence, food and energy insecurity and other crises. The invasion was preceded by previous cycles of conflict, including Russia's 2014 seizure and annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed local militias and Ukrainian security forces, and deadlocked negotiations, all following the change of government in Ukraine caused by the Maidan uprising between late 2013 and 2014. In contravention of international law, Russia's invasion and war targeted Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The antagonism between the US, the EU and NATO on one side and Russia on the other, as well as a failed security architecture in Europe, also influenced the context of the conflict and the prospects for resolution. Shortly after the invasion began, Ukraine and Russia began peace talks in various formats, addressing different topics. Facilitated by Türkiye, the political and military negotiations reached a certain degree of rapprochement around a possible permanent neutrality agreement with respect to NATO, security guarantees and postponement of the Crimean issue, to be resolved through diplomatic channels in 15 years. However, the negotiations broke down in April. Russia annexed four regions in September 2022, despite not controlling them in their entirety, and stated that any negotiations should recognise this new situation. Ukraine stated that it wished to regain control of the entire territory, including Crimea and Donbas. The talks on humanitarian issues, nuclear safety and grain exports continued.

In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political or military negotiations that had been broken off in April 2022 and talks only continued on prisoner exchanges, grain exports (until July) and the protection of nuclear infrastructure. Ukraine rolled out its own road map ("Ukraine's Peace Formula") and the multilevel talks associated with it, while third-party initiatives to promote the search for a solution to the conflict increased during the year. The Russian invasion caused serious impacts on human and environmental security in its second year, while the military front lines remained stagnant despite the Ukrainian military counteroffensive that began in June.¹⁸ Ukraine rejected a Russian truce proposal for Orthodox Christmas in January 2023, calling it propaganda, and accused Moscow of failing to comply with it. Türkiye, a facilitating actor in the 2022 negotiations, expressed its willingness to promote local ceasefires and localised de-escalations in January 2023, saying that neither party was in a position to win the war militarily. Other actors during the year discussed the stagnation on the front lines, including Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi,¹⁹ as well as the improbability of military victory.²⁰ The parties remained

16 See the chapter on Gender in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

17 This table includes actors playing roles of mediation/facilitation and support in any of the areas of dialogue active between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. They are included regardless of the frequency or scope of their involvement. In 2022, the actors playing some role included in this table were: Türkiye, the UN, Israel, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the IAEA, the OSCE, Germany and France. Beyond the actors listed in this table, this chapter analyses and includes other actors that promoted dialogue during the year and are not considered third parties in this yearbook.

18 See the summary on the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

19 The Economist, "Ukraine's commander-in-chief on the breakthrough he needs to beat Russia", *The Economist*, 1st November 2023.

20 Charap, Samuel, "An Unwinnable War: Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2023.

greatly at odds on the issues throughout the year and there was no resumption of negotiations, ceasefire agreements or humanitarian truces.

At different times of the year, **Ukraine asserted that the withdrawal of Russian troops was a precondition for negotiating a ceasefire with Russia.** Ukraine also refused to exchange territory for a ceasefire or a peace agreement and said that any possible demilitarised zone must be on the Russian side of the border. **Overall, Ukraine promoted what it called its Peace Formula (2022), its own road map including the restoration of territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops and the cessation of hostilities, a security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic space and the signing of the Kyiv Security Compact.**²¹ It reflects the Ukrainian approach that a peace plan for Ukraine cannot be created by Russia, the aggressor. Russia's position was reflected in Russian **President Vladimir Putin's press conference in December, in which he noted that his goals remained the "denazification", "demilitarisation" and "neutral status" of Ukraine. He called southeastern Ukraine historically Russian territory.** At other times of the year, representatives of the Russian regime indicated that recognition of the "new territorial reality" was a requirement for ending hostilities. In September, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rejected Ukraine's Peace Formula, arguing that even though it was presented as the only basis for negotiations, it was unviable. Regarding the NATO issue, David Arakhamia, who was the Ukrainian chief negotiator in the 2022 negotiations, said in an interview on a Ukrainian TV channel in November that the issue of neutrality towards NATO had been Russia's main objective in the 2022 negotiations. According to Arakhamia, Ukraine did not accept neutrality then because it would require changes to the Constitution, due to a lack of trust and of full guarantees, as well as the position of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the time, who rejected any agreement and supported war with Russia.²² Türkiye, a facilitating actor maintaining relations with both parties and an ally of Russia on different international issues, expressed its interpretation through presidential advisor Ibrahim Kalin that the war would end once the West, and specifically the United States, treated Russia as a world power that rejects NATO's presence in its vicinity.

Amidst this great disagreement and prioritisation of the battlefield, **there were no bilateral negotiations on substantive issues (sovereignty, territory, NATO and Russia-West relations).** Instead, **Ukraine rolled out its**

Peace Formula alongside its military counteroffensive. **To do so, it promoted the organisation of international peace conferences,** with security advisers and mid-level ministerial positions of dozens of countries (in Denmark in June, with 15 countries; in Saudi Arabia in August, with 43 countries, including China; and in Malta in October, with 65 countries, without China). It also activated **internationalised working groups on Peace Formula-related issues, maintained regular dialogue with allied governments and conducted negotiations on security guarantees with partners.** Ukraine claimed that given the increasing participation of countries in peace conferences, Russia would have to give in and accept the conditions for peace. However, disagreements also arose at the conferences, from which Russia was excluded. At the summit in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Brazil argued that any real negotiations had to include all parties and that even though Ukraine was the biggest victim, Moscow would have to be involved in the process somehow. Overall, even without tangible results, the conferences revealed Ukraine's greater capacity to

In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that had been broken off in April 2022 and talks only continued on prisoner exchanges, grain exports (until July) and the protection of nuclear infrastructure

bring together international actors with different positions and interests in the conflict. Russia rejected and criticised the conferences. During Ukraine's talks with its allies on security guarantees, the G7 issued a joint statement on 12 July, during the NATO summit, announcing the start of negotiations to establish security guarantees for Ukraine through bilateral and long-term commitments with a largely military focus, including the supply of land, air and maritime military equipment, support for the development of the Ukrainian defence industry, the training of Ukrainian forces, intelligence cooperation, support in cyber defence and other forms of support, as well as possible forms of military and non-military response in case of future aggression. According to the G7, this support will run parallel to Ukraine's path towards future integration into the "Euro-Atlantic community". As part of this G7 declaration, **Ukraine began bilateral negotiations in the following months with the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan and France on security guarantees.** In addition, over 20 countries signed the G7 declaration. At its July summit, NATO stated that Ukraine's future was in NATO. In support for the country, it withdrew the requirement for an Accession Action Plan, but did not formally invite Ukraine to join or set a schedule for that.

Actors already involved in facilitation work in 2022, such as Türkiye and the UN, continued their efforts to promote dialogue in different spheres during the year. **Other actors, mainly from outside the Euro-Atlantic**

21 For more information on the Peace Formula and elements of the Kyiv Security Pact, see Escola de Cultura de Paz, *Negociaciones de paz 2022. Análisis de tendencias y escenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023; and Vilellas, Ana, *La invasión de Rusia en Ucrania (1). Las negociaciones fallidas entre Rusia y Ucrania y retos para una vía de solución diplomática*, Apunts ECP de Conflictes i Pau No. 24, March 2023.

22 Kyiv Post, "Russia Offered to End War in 2022 If Ukraine Scrapped NATO Ambitions – Zelensky Party Chief", *Kyiv Post*, 26 November 2023.

sphere, also took steps or promoted the search for non-military solutions. On 24 February, China presented a 12-point document with its position on a political settlement of the conflict. The points included respecting the sovereignty of all countries and their independence and territorial integrity (point 1) and addressing the security concerns of all parties and achieving a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture in Europe (point 2). China also appointed diplomat Li Hui, the former ambassador to Russia (2009-2019) and the special representative for Eurasian affairs since 2019, as Beijing's special envoy to resolve the conflict. China maintained separate contacts with the parties (Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in March, his call with Zelensky in April and the special envoy's trip to Ukraine, Russia and other European countries in May). In his meeting with Zelensky, Li Hui pointed out that all parties had to create conditions to end the war and start peace talks. **Saudi Arabia also raised its diplomatic profile in the conflict, hosting the second conference organised by Ukraine for its Peace Formula in Jeddah in August.** Previously, in May, Zelensky visited Saudi Arabia, where he met with Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman and participated in the Arab League summit to rally support for Ukraine's Peace Formula. The leaders of both countries held calls almost monthly, according to Ukrainian media outlets. Meanwhile, the Indonesian defence minister presented a five-point proposal to promote a ceasefire and a solution to the conflict in June, though it was criticised by Ukraine and the EU. A delegation of six African leaders (from South Africa, Senegal, Egypt, Zambia, Comoros and Uganda) held meetings in Kyiv and Moscow in June and issued a 10-point peace proposal that included the de-escalation of hostilities, respect for state sovereignty and security guarantees. In May, Vatican City appointed Cardinal Matteo Zuppi as its special peace envoy for Ukraine, who was involved in efforts and meetings mainly about humanitarian issues to promote the return of minors after Ukraine requested support from the Vatican in this area in April.

Russia and Ukraine negotiated and reached agreements to exchange prisoners and repatriate the dead for much of the year, as well as some specific agreements for the return of minors forcibly deported to Russia or to areas under occupation. This area involved negotiation between a host of actors, including human rights commissioners and military actors, with the support and facilitation of the ICRC, Türkiye, Qatar, UAE, Vatican City and some Ukrainian non-governmental organisations. Preceded by prior warnings and demands for conditions, **Moscow ended**

Ukraine asserted that the withdrawal of Russian troops was a precondition for negotiating a ceasefire with Russia and in 2023 Ukraine began bilateral negotiations with the US, UK, Canada, Japan and France on security guarantees

China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Vatican City and African leaders were involved in promoting dialogue between Russia and Ukraine in 2023

its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative (2022) in July. As an exception to the sanctions imposed on Russia, this agreement had allowed the export of grain, other food products and fertilisers from three Ukrainian seaports and through a humanitarian maritime corridor in the Black Sea, as well as the export of Russian food and fertilisers to global markets through a Memorandum of Understanding. After 60-day renewals in March and May 2023, it was finally broken in July. Russia said it left the agreement mainly because its demand that the Russian Agricultural Bank be reconnected to the SWIFT international banking system had been rejected. The UN Secretary-General regretted the failure to renew the agreement and Russia's rejection of an alternative proposal for connecting a subsidiary of the Russian bank to the SWIFT system. Moscow began to consider

ships crossing the Black Sea as military targets and bombed grain warehouses and port facilities several times. Ukraine reorganised exports through other routes, causing tension with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia due to the impacts on local prices. Finally, **the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) spoke separately with the parties on protecting nuclear infrastructure.** In 2023, it shifted from its previous focus of trying to achieve an agreement on a demilitarised protection zone around the Zaporizhzhia plant (the largest in Europe) to promoting protection of the plant itself, without any territorial dimension, by getting the parties to agree to some principles. The situation in Zaporizhzhia remained fragile, exacerbated by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023, blamed on Russia. Meanwhile, activists from Ukraine and Russia and civil society organisations from around 30 countries met in Vienna in July at the International Summit for Peace in Ukraine, where they urged international actors to promote a ceasefire and negotiations.²³ In Ukraine, the population continued to be involved in multiple areas of mutual support in the face of the Russian invasion.

Gender, peace and security

There was no information on the integration of the gender perspective in the active direct or indirect talks (prisoner exchange, grain export and the protection of nuclear infrastructure), nor in the rollout of the Ukrainian Peace Formula with dialogue with international actors in multiple levels. In the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine for the release of prisoners, Russia had a female negotiator, Tatiana Moskalkova, who is Russia's commissioner for human rights. All the same, the Russian government maintained its opposition to policies of gender equality

23 International Summit for Peace in Ukraine, *Final Declaration*, June 2023.

and sexual diversity. The UN mediation team in the negotiations on grain exports was co-led by UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan, together with the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths. Participating in the session “Advancing the sustainability and adaptability of the women, peace and security agenda” during the UN General Assembly in September, Grynspan called for greater female participation in peacebuilding efforts around the world. Both in Russia and in Ukraine, women relatives of soldiers protested to demand their demobilisation and return from the war front.

Russia and the Caucasus

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Negotiating actors	Armenia, Azerbaijan, representatives of self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh
Third parties	EU, USA, Russia, Iran, Türkiye, Georgia ²⁴
Relevant agreements	Bishkek Protocol (1994), Ceasefire agreement (1994), Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation (2020), cessation of hostilities agreement between Azerbaijan and the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (2023)

Summary:

The armed conflict going from 1992 to 1994 between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh – an enclave of Armenian majority belonging to Azerbaijan that declared independence in 1992 – ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1994, after causing more than 20,000 dead and one million displaced people as well as the military occupation by Armenia of several districts around Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku and Yerevan carried out various stages of negotiations, including around some basic principles (Madrid Principles, 2007) proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group for resolving the conflict (withdrawal of Armenia from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, provisional status to Nagorno-Karabakh, the right for displaced persons to return, an eventual decision on the final status of the territory through a binding expression of will, international security safeguards, corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh). Over the years, the negotiating process faced deadlock, a fragile ceasefire line, belligerent rhetoric, an arms race and geostrategic disputes. War broke out again in September 2020, with an Azerbaijani military offensive resulting in Baku’s seizure of districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh and part of the enclave, a fragile ceasefire and the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces. In 2023, Azerbaijan seized control of all of Nagorno-Karabakh through military means, prompting its Armenian population to flee. The self-proclaimed republic was

dismantled. The process between Baku and Yerevan moved to a focus on the normalisation of relations (the delimitation of borders, the recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, transport routes), influenced by Azerbaijan’s position of hegemony in a regional and global context affected by the war in Ukraine and geostrategic competition.

The South Caucasus faced serious setbacks in terms of peacebuilding. Three years after the Azerbaijani offensive and war of 2020, another Azerbaijani attack in September led to the exodus of almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh, amounting to over 100,000 people, and the enclave’s forcible reintegration into Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan on normalising their relations continued during the year, which ranged between messages about agreement on principles for a final peace treaty and disagreements, as well as Armenian fears of the risk of attacks on its soil. The process was influenced by the geopolitical context and dynamics, which included Azerbaijan’s military and economic hegemony, tensions between Armenia and Russia and Armenia’s rapprochement with the EU, the dispute between Russia and the West, alliances between Azerbaijan and Türkiye and some cooperation between the regional powers, including Iran.

Talks took place in two tracks over the course of 2023, before the invasion on 19 September. The first focused on negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan with various formats and mediators (EU, USA, Russia) on the normalisation of relations, territorial integrity, the delimitation of borders, transport routes and other issues. There were meetings in Washington, Brussels and Moscow, as well as diplomatic efforts and trips to the region by the mediating actors. The meetings had difficult moments and the rhetoric was sometimes confrontational, interspersed with statements that progress was being made. Some analysts identified a change in Baku’s rhetoric from previous stages, shifting from urgency and accusations that Armenia was delaying the process to the emphasis that time was on Azerbaijan’s side.²⁵ The second track of discussion included communication between Azerbaijan and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from Azerbaijan’s refusal to negotiate with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh since its 2020 military victory, which it considered an internal issue, burying the previous negotiating framework. Armenia had accepted Azerbaijan’s territorial sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh since 2022, but still demanded guarantees of rights and security for the Armenian population there. **On 1 March 2023, the first meeting took place with high-ranking political delegations from**

²⁴ Iran and Türkiye are included due to their participation in the 3+3 regional platform. This platform was launched in 2021 at Türkiye’s behest with the stated objective of promoting peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It brings together Türkiye, Russia, Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though invited, Georgia has not yet participated in this format. In 2020, Russia and Türkiye established a joint monitoring centre for the 2020 ceasefire. However, the status of Türkiye and the 3+3 platform as third parties may be subject to different interpretations. Since 2023, the OSCE Minsk Group has not been included in this table as it has become inoperative. It was co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States; the rest of its permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Türkiye. On the other hand, Georgia is included because it facilitated dialogue between the parties in conflict in 2023.

²⁵ Kucera, Joshua, “Schedule for Armenia-Azerbaijan agreement slipping into the future”, *Eurasianet*, 15 July 2023.

Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, led respectively by MP Ramin Mammadov and by a representative of the enclave's national security council and sponsored by Andrei Volkov, the commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces at their headquarters in Khojaly. There were substantive disagreements during the meeting. **According to Azerbaijan, discussions began on the integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan, under the umbrella of the Constitution and Parliament of Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh's delegation refused to discuss integration into Azerbaijan and said days later that Baku was threatening more drastic steps if they did not give up their demands for independence.** The parties disagreed over the location for subsequent meetings. Nagorno-Karabakh demanded international mediation, which was rejected by Baku. No further meetings of this kind emerged before the attack on 19 September. In the months running up to September, there were armed incidents and ceasefire violations, the humanitarian situation worsened due to Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor (the only route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia) since December 2022 and statements and analyses indicating risks of an Azerbaijani military operation increased. In a speech on 29 May, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev urged Nagorno-Karabakh to dissolve its institutions and get its population to accept Azerbaijani citizenship or go elsewhere, warning that Baku could launch a military operation.

Azerbaijan's military attack on 19 September led to the capitulation of the forces of Nagorno-Karabakh. In a complete cessation of hostilities agreement signed on 20 September, facilitated by Russia and on the terms imposed by Baku, the parties agreed to the withdrawal of all Armenian Armed Forces present in Nagorno-Karabakh (of which there were none, according to the government of Armenia) and the dissolution and complete disarmament of the armed forces of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the first few days after the attack, the advisor to Azerbaijani President Hikmet Hajiyev anticipated a plan for the socioeconomic integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and an amnesty plan for the military forces of the enclave that laid down their arms, though it would not be applicable to those considered responsible for crimes during the Nagorno-Karabakh War of the 1990s. In the days after the cessation of hostilities, meetings took place between

The South Caucasus faced serious setbacks in terms of peacebuilding, with an Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh that led to the exodus of almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the enclave's forcible reintegration into Azerbaijan

Women's and LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations in Armenia condemned Azerbaijan's military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September and become involved in the humanitarian response to the crisis

representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan that addressed humanitarian issues, disarmament and the integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. **Nagorno-Karabakh's President Samvel Shahramanyan issued a decree on 28 September dissolving the self-proclaimed republic, by which it would cease to exist on 1 January 2024.** Between late September and early October, Azerbaijan arrested several political and military leaders of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Azerbaijan presented its integration plan in early October, claiming that it contained guarantees of educational, cultural, linguistic and religious rights. However, **Azerbaijan's promises of guarantees contrasted with the fears and mistrust of the local population, almost all of which had already left Nagorno-Karabakh.** A UN mission visited parts of Nagorno-Karabakh on 1 October and noted that according to their interlocutors, only between 50 and 1,000 of around 120,000 Armenian inhabitants remained in the region.

After the invasion and the issue of the integration of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan was settled through military force, the direct talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan were separated from what had been their main obstacle, Nagorno-Karabakh, but were strained nonetheless. In late November, the border commissions of Armenia and Azerbaijan met, though there were no significant results. In December, they announced **confidence-building measures,²⁶ including the exchange of military prisoners, and reaffirmed their desire to achieve a peace treaty based on principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.** However, in the last four months of the year the parties to the conflict increasingly disagreed with some mediators, with Azerbaijan rebuffing France and the EU and Armenia snubbing Russia in some forums and meetings.²⁷ Meanwhile, regional actors gained momentum, such as the 3+3 platform (Russia, Türkiye, Iran, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, though still without the latter's participation) and Georgia's offers to mediate. In the final months of the year, there were mutual accusations of delaying the negotiations and public messages of progress, including statements by the parties that there was agreement on the principles for a peace treaty. **At different times, Armenia indicated the risks of new Azerbaijani military operations leading to the forcible seizure of parts of Armenia.** In December, the EU agreed to boost the strength of the

26 Joint statement of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 7 December 2023.

27 See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Risk scenarios and scenarios and opportunities for peace*, January 2024.

civilian observation mission on the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan (EUMA) from 138 to 209 members. Launched in February, the EUMA replaced the EUMCAP, which was operational from October to December 2022.

Gender, peace and security

Women’s and LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations in Armenia condemned Azerbaijan’s military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September, such as the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Pink Armenia. The anti-militarist Azerbaijan Feminist Peace Collective also spoke out against the invasion, calling on the Azerbaijani population not to let their grievances be exploited for war. Armenia’s population, including women and women’s organisations, engaged in grassroots initiatives in a humanitarian response to the forced displacement of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh, including the provision of basic goods. During the months of blockade of the Lachin corridor, women from Nagorno-Karabakh engaged in forms of solidarity and mutual support.

The various formats of the negotiations took place without the participation of women negotiators or mediators, nor the integration of the gender perspective in the negotiations. There was no evidence that the mediators had mechanisms for indirect participation with civil society or with women’s organisations. Aside from the negotiating process, the EU mission in Armenia (EUMA) met with representatives of women’s organisations at a conference in November co-organised by the EUMA and the Centre for Women’s Rights, in which the organisation Women’s Agenda also participated. According to the latter, the meeting addressed the mission’s work and operations and aspects of them related to the women, peace and security agenda.

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	
Negotiating actors	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ²⁸
Third parties	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ²⁹
Relevant agreements	Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian–Ossetian Conflict (Sochi Agreement) (1992), Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces (1994) [agreement dealing with conflict on Abkhazia], Protocol of agreement (2008), Implementation of the Plan of 12 August 2008 (2008)

Summary:

The war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008, which began in South Ossetia and spread to Abkhazia and

territory not disputed by Georgia, ended in a six-point peace agreement mediated by the EU. The peace plan included the start of international talks on security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two small territories in the northwest and north-central Georgia bordering Russia that are internationally recognised as regions of Georgia, though de facto independent since the end of the wars between Abkhaz and Georgian forces (1992-1994) and between Ossetian and Georgian forces (1991-1992) regarding their status. The 2008 agreement gave way to the start of talks known as the Geneva International Discussions (GID), which bring together representatives of Georgia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Russia under international mediation (the OSCE, EU and UN, with the US as an observer). According to the agreement, the talks were supposed to focus on provisions to guarantee security and stability in the region, the issue of the refugees and displaced populations and any other issue agreed by the parties, so the disputed status of the territories was not explicitly addressed. Thus, after the 2008 war, Russia formally recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and established agreements and a permanent military presence there despite Georgian opposition. The post-2008 phase involved the dismantling of previous dialogue and observation mechanisms, including the OSCE and the UN missions, and replaced the previous separate talks with a single format covering both disputed regions. An EU observation mission was also authorised, though it was given no access to the disputed territories. The GID have two working groups (on security and humanitarian issues) and under its aegis one Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism was created for each region in 2009, facilitated by the EU and OSCE. Amidst a context of geopolitical rivalry between Russia and Western political, economic and military players (the US, EU and NATO), aggravated since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and chronic antagonism between the disputed regions and Georgia, the negotiating process faces many obstacles.

The negotiating process involving Georgia, the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Russia largely remained deadlocked and beset with difficulties, including the entrenched parties’ positions and regional and global geostrategic tension. In 2023, there were fresh delays in the negotiating process. In 2022, the year of the start of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the co-mediators of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) had delayed the rounds of talks to “protect” the process from the negative effects of the war in Ukraine and the international context of division, holding only one of the four usual rounds of the GID per year. One year later, on 31 January, the co-mediators (UN, OSCE, EU) announced that they were postponing the 57th round, scheduled for early February 2023, until April, citing timing issues. The authorities of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia criticised the decision, which they described as unilateral and lacking objective reasons, and refused to hold the preparatory meetings scheduled for February with the co-mediators in their respective territories. However, the delegation of co-mediators was received by the Georgian authorities. In total, three of the four annual rounds were held in 2023 (the 57th in April, the 58th in July and the 59th in December).

28 Russia’s status in the Georgian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

29 Ibid.

Amidst an extremely complex geopolitical climate, the co-mediators said that the participants' positions unanimously supported the continuity of the GID. However, they also noted the lack of agreement on the non-use of force, a main issue on the negotiating agenda. As in previous years, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia demanded bilateral agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia and each of the two de facto independent regions. Russia argued that the military training activities of NATO and the United States in the region and Georgia's intention to join NATO made it more important to reach these agreements. Georgia, which already issued a unilateral commitment not to use force in 2010, maintained its position that such an agreement should be bilateral between Russia and Georgia, as it considers Russia the main party to the conflict.

The representatives of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia walked out the working group meeting on humanitarian issues in the three rounds of the 2023 GID, preventing the issue of the right of return of the Georgian internally displaced and refugee population from being addressed in its entirety, as in previous years. While in the July round the participants indicated that the situation in the border areas was stable, the December round took place amidst increased tension there after one Georgian citizen was shot by Russian border troops near the border between South Ossetia and Georgia in November and another Georgian citizen was arrested. The incident led to a meeting between representatives of Georgia, Russia and the EU Observation Mission and the activation of the communication hotline managed by the mission. The Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) remained active during the year, with meetings in January, March, April, September, November and December. It deals with South Ossetia and is co-facilitated by the EU and the OSCE. The Gali IPRM remained non-operational, as it has been since 2018. The negotiating process as a whole took place in a local and regional context of various kinds of tension, which added uncertainty. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in its second year, and Azerbaijan's military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh both projected instability throughout the region. In 2023, Georgia received the status of an EU candidate country while dynamics of political and social polarisation there caused concern.

Gender, peace and security

In previous years, gaps had been identified between the gender-related limitations of the negotiating process, indicated by members of civil society, and the commitments taken on by the co-mediating actors. There were no significant changes in 2023. Georgia held meetings between government representatives

participating in the IPRM and representatives of civil society, including women's organisations, as well as internally displaced people and women affected by the conflict, to exchange information and produce discussion, with the support of UN Women. On the other hand, in the GID negotiations, the main co-mediators' delegation continued to have one woman out of a total of three co-mediators (the UN representative in the GID, Cihan Sultanoglu, OSCE representative Siegfried Wöber and EU special representative Toivo Klaar). A man continued to lead the EU observation mission in Georgia (EUMM), which co-facilitates the IPRMs with the OSCE, following the appointment of Dimitrios Karabalis as the new head, who took over from Tibor Kozma in January 2023.

Georgia issued its thematic report on the implementation of the women' peace and security agenda, with recommendations such as facilitating women's effective participation in the GID and IRPM and parliamentary oversight of compliance with the recommendations. In terms of civil society, **the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus remained involved in promoting the transformation of conflicts in the region** and women's participation in peacebuilding there. In 2023, it published a study that included an analysis of the current situation of the various conflicts in the entire South Caucasus region and provided recommendations based on individual and group interviews with civil society actors involved in peacebuilding from different sectors. It identified a profound lack of trust, the reactivation of trauma in different populations as a result of the war in Ukraine and concerns about human security, resource degradation, the reintegration of former combatants, violence against women and children, the impacts of militarisation and economic issues. It also recommended the need for direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict and public diplomacy.³⁰

South-east Europe

Cyprus	
Negotiating actors	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
Third parties	UN, EU, Guarantor Countries (Türkiye, Greece and United Kingdom)
Relevant agreements	13 February agreement (2004)

Summary:

Inhabited by a Greek majority, a Turkish population and other minorities, the island of Cyprus faces a situation of long-lasting unresolved conflict. Preceded by the violence of the 1950s, followed by independence in 1960, Cyprus was affected by a crisis in which the Turkish Cypriot population was displaced from power, calling into question the distribution of power stipulated in the Constitution and triggering new violent incidents, which led to the deployment

30 Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, *Is there a key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus?*, NWMSC, 2023.

of the UNFICYP peacekeeping mission in 1964. There was an underlying confrontation between the aspirations of *enosis* (union with Greece) of the Greek Cypriot population and *taksim* (partition) by Turkish Cypriot population. A coup in 1974 with the aim of promoting unification with Greece triggered a military invasion of the island by Türkiye. The crisis led to population displacement and the division of the island between the northern third under Turkish Cypriot control and two-thirds in the south under Greek Cypriot control, separated by a demilitarised zone known as the buffer zone or “Green Line”, supervised by the UN. Since the division of the island there have been efforts to find a solution, such as high-level dialogues in the 70s and initiatives in the following decades promoted by successive UN Secretaries-General. The Annan Plan for a bizonal bicomunal federation was approved in referendum in 2004 by the Turkish Cypriots and rejected by the Greek Cypriots. After the failure of the Christofias-Talat dialogue (2008-2012), a new phase of negotiations began in 2014. An international negotiating conference in Switzerland in 2017 ended without an agreement between the parties. Since then, the process has remained stalled at the highest political level.

The parties to the conflict did not reach an agreement to resume formal joint negotiations at the highest political level, so the negotiating process between leaders remained deadlocked for another year with large gaps between their positions regarding the solution framework. The dialogue did continue at other levels of the process, with UN facilitation, allowing the parties to successfully address a crisis in August regarding incidents that caused minor injuries to several members of the UN peacekeeping forces. The negotiating process took place in an election year in 2023, with a presidential election in the Republic of Cyprus (January-February) and a parliamentary and presidential election in Türkiye (May). Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, a former foreign minister (2018-2022) and independent candidate supported by conservative forces, indicated that resuming the talks was a priority. Throughout the year, he advocated the Greek Cypriot solution based on reunification and a bizonal and bicomunal federation, a framework defended by the United Nations and on which the negotiating process, stalled since 2017, has pivoted. Turkish Cypriot President Ersin Tatar continued to argue that this framework was outdated and demanded a two-state solution, as he has maintained with the support of Türkiye since coming to power in 2020. The re-election of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2023 ensured the continuation of that position. Throughout the year, Tatar demanded the recognition of Turkish Cypriot sovereignty as a requirement for resuming formal negotiations at the highest level. There was diplomatic rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye during the year, but it remained to be seen if it would have an impact on the Cypriot issue.

The dialogue continued over the unresolved conflict in Cyprus, though it was not formally resumed at the highest political level

Though the negotiating process between the leaders did not formally restart, they held an informal meeting in February under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Cyprus Colin Stewart. In July, Christodoulides and Tatar visited a laboratory of the joint technical committee about missing persons together. According to Cypriot media outlets, during the visit the Greek Cypriot president raised the possibility of establishing a truth commission that could operate alongside the technical committee. There was no agreement for a joint meeting of the two Cypriot leaders with the UN Secretary-General during the UN General Assembly in September and they held separate meetings. In his speech at the UN General Assembly, the president of Türkiye said that there could be no solution based on a federal model and urged the international community to accept the situation and recognise the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The two leaders held another informal meeting in December as part of an end-of-the-year reception organised by UNFICYP. In late December, the parties to the conflict accepted the appointment of a personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General, former Colombian Foreign Minister María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar. She was officially appointed in early January 2024 with a mandate of good offices to seek common ground on how to move forward on the Cypriot issue. The parties' acceptance came after months of diplomatic discussions.

The dialogue was maintained on some level throughout the year. The UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus held regular separate meetings with the two leaders and with other political and social actors on the island. UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary A. DiCarlo and the

Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas in the United Nations' Department of Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenca, held separate meetings with both leaders in their visits to the island in March and August, respectively. During the year, the Greek Cypriot leader promoted the idea of a more active role for the EU in resolving the conflict. Analysts said that the appointment of an EU special envoy for the Cypriot issue was being ruled out for the moment, but the EU had offered to play an active role in supporting the process.³¹

The joint technical committees remained active in the negotiating process, though with unbalanced results and an uneven pace.

A brief crisis broke out in August over the Turkish Cypriot authorities' unilateral decision to build a road between the towns of Pyla and Arsos, through the Green Line buffer zone. Three UNFICYP members were slightly injured when they were attacked after trying to

31 International Crisis Group, “How to Reinvigorate the UN's Mediation Efforts in Cyprus”, *ICG Commentary*, 18 August 2023.

stop the road work. The parties reached a UN-facilitated agreement in October that authorised the construction of the road, the prohibition of military vehicles along the new road and the installation of a new checkpoint with UNFICYP personnel, among other points. Stewart praised the agreement, calling it a model to make headway elsewhere in the negotiating process. However, there were other incidents during the year, including a brief incursion by Turkish soldiers into the buffer zone. Other avenues of non-governmental dialogue remained active, such as conversations between representatives of political parties, facilitated by Slovakia, talks between religious actors, facilitated by Sweden, and the Cyprus Academic Dialogue. Civil society organisations conducted activities and initiatives to promote dialogue during the year.

Gender, peace and security

The action plan adopted by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality in 2022 with recommendations to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to promote the integration of the gender perspective in the negotiating process and women’s substantive participation remained pending implementation in 2023, according to Maria Hadjipavlou, an academic and member of the Gender Advisory Team (GAT), a platform for women activists and academics promoting a negotiated resolution with a gender perspective. Hadjipavlou is also a member of the Cyprus Antenna of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).³² Hadjipavlou described several obstacles to implementing the plan, such as the lack of mechanisms of accountability for compliance with the plan and bureaucratic and hierarchical procedures to carry out activities promoted by the committee that required authorisation from the leaders and coordinators of the committees, producing delays and frustration. Hadjipavlou recommended more autonomy for the technical committee. She also addressed other hurdles and difficulties, such as the disconnect between the different levels of the peacebuilding process and the historical, structural, political, psychological and social factors that influenced women’s lower levels of participation in decision-making and the peace process.

Cyprus’ delegation at the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation session on 25 October, which focused on the women, peace and security agenda, said that women’s effective participation and leadership in all decision-making levels was a crosscutting priority. It alluded to the national action plan on women, peace and security, but emphasised military aspects, such as the establishment of a military gender advisory council and training material for personnel in military and civilian missions,

all without reference to the action plan to promote women’s participation in the conflict resolution process and its degree of implementation.³³ Women’s civil society organisations participated in initiatives and forums for building bridges and dialogue throughout the year.

Serbia – Kosovo	
Negotiating actors	Serbia, Kosovo
Third parties	EU, UN, USA, Germany, France, Italy
Relevant agreements	Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia (1999), First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations between the republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia (Brussels Agreement) (2013), Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia (2023) and its associated annex (2023)

Summary:

Since the end of the 1998-1999 war between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanian armed group KLA, with the participation of NATO, the status of Kosovo has remained in dispute. This Albanian-majority land has historically been part of the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and more recently the Republic of Serbia in Yugoslavia (as an autonomous region and autonomous province, successively). Following an interim international administration for Kosovo with a mandate from the UN Security Council (Resolution 1244, of 1999), a process to discuss its status began in 2006 under the aegis of the United Nations. Kosovo supported the proposal made by the UN Secretary-General’s special envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, entailing internationally supervised independence for Kosovo and decentralisation for its Serbian minority, though Serbia rejected it. This was followed by fresh attempts at dialogue facilitated by a troika (USA, EU, Russia) that also failed. In 2008 Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed its independence and pledged to implement the Ahtisaari plan. The start of a new process of dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo in 2011 under facilitation of the EU (Brussels Process) opened the doors to rapprochement on technical and political issues. Since its inception there was some progress, including the agreement to dismantle parallel political, judicial and security structures of the Serb-inhabited areas of Kosovo; as well as to create an association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. However, the negotiating process faces many problems due to substantive disagreements on pending issues and the failure to implement previous agreements. Other challenges include intercommunity tensions and strain between Kosovar institutions and the Kosovo Serb population, as well as shortcomings in transitional justice.

Despite some progress made in the first few months, the dialogue remained at an impasse for the rest of the year and was influenced by a serious spike in tension

32 Hadjipavlou, Maria, “The Exclusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Cyprus Peace Negotiations: A Critical Perspective”, *IAI Commentaries*, 39, August 2023.

33 Permanent mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the OSCE, United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna, *Statement by the Delegation of Cyprus. 1060th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation (25 October 2023). Agenda Item 1, Security Dialogue: “Women Peace and Security”*, 27 October 2023

between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as within Kosovo.³⁴

On 27 February, Kosovo and Serbia verbally accepted the Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, and its implementation annex on 18 March, both proposed by the EU and based on a French and German concept. According to the EU, together they constituted a binding agreement for both parties. The February agreement contained 11 articles,³⁵ including the parties' commitment to mutual recognition of their respective national documents and symbols, without requiring Serbia to formally recognise Kosovo as a state, Serbia's promise not to object to Kosovo's entry into international organisations, both parties' pledge to establish ways to ensure an "appropriate level" of self-government for the Kosovo Serb community, an obligation to implement previous agreements and the continuation of EU-facilitated talks to reach a legally binding agreement for the comprehensive normalisation of relations. The March annex included content and procedural aspects, such as the acceptance that all articles would be implemented independently of each other and that the parties would not block the application of any article.³⁶ The February agreement and its annex were the outcome of meetings between the parties facilitated by the EU, as well as diplomatic efforts involving the US, France, Germany and Italy. On 18 April, the parties established a Joint Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation.

Despite the verbal support for the agreement and the annex, problems arose very quickly, hand in hand with disagreements on substantive issues such as the creation of an association of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo, agreed on in 2013 and paralysed ever since, and the political and social tension in northern Kosovo and between Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti rejected the draft statute of association presented at the 2 May meeting between Serbian and Kosovar leaders in Brussels, sponsored by EU High Representative Josep Borrell, and announced that he would present their own proposal. The lack of agreement on how to stage the implementation of the February agreement and its March annex was also evident. Various EU-facilitated meetings in Brussels between May and September in various formats did not reach an agreement to move the process forward, which came to a standstill. Serbia accepted and Kosovo rejected an EU proposal to simultaneously address the issues that each side advocated addressing first.

The deadlock in the negotiating process influenced and was affected by the deteriorating situation in northern Kosovo and between Kosovo and Serbia.

The lines of tension, which had an impact on the impasse in the negotiating process, included political tension, reflected in the Kosovo Serbs representatives' abandonment of the institutions in 2022 and their boycott of the municipal elections in April 2023 after making their turnout conditional on the establishment of the association of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo, one of the main subjects of the negotiations. Without their turnout, the elections in the Kosovo Serb majority municipalities were won by Kosovo Albanian parties (3.4% turnout). Post-election protests led to seriously violent incidents in late May. The United States and the EU imposed some

Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo

sanctions on Kosovo, with the EU urging its government to de-escalate, including by withdrawing special police units from around municipal facilities and by holding early elections in those municipalities. In July and August, Kosovo withdrew part of the special police units, but it did not hold new elections. After various incidents over the following months, tension escalated with a paramilitary ambush against a police patrol in Banjska (northern Kosovo, 15 km from the border with Serbia) on 24 September and the subsequent entrenchment of the assailants (around 30 armed men, according to Kosovo) in an Orthodox monastery. A police officer and three of the assailants died. Kosovo accused Serbia of

organising the assault, which the Kosovar authorities said was aimed at annexing northern Kosovo. Belgrade denied any involvement. Milan Radoičić, the vice president of Kosovo's main Serbian party, Srpska Lista, claimed responsibility for the attack. He was arrested in Belgrade and released. Serbia said that he would be prosecuted and refused to extradite him to Kosovo. NATO increased its troops in Kosovo. The attack on 24 September greatly increased the challenges in relations between Kosovo and Serbia and international actors warned that the lack of dialogue could lead to a new escalation. After separate meetings with the parties, in October a delegation of the special representative of the EU, the US and advisors to the leaders of France, Germany and Italy submitted to Kosovo and Serbia a plan to normalise their relations based on the February and March agreements. According to analysts, the new plan was a slight variation of those agreements and included Serbia's non-opposition to other governments recognising Kosovo or its incorporation into international organisations, as well as a proposal for a statute of

34 See the summary on the socio-political crisis in Serbia (Kosovo) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

35 See the full agreement at: EEAS Press Team, "Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia", EEAS, 27 February 2023.

36 See the full agreement at: EEAS Press Team, "Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Implementation Annex to the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia", EEAS, 18 March 2023.

association for the Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo.³⁷ The Kosovar leader demanded sanctions against Serbia for the events in Banjska and warned that there would be no talks without sanctions. Both leaders were invited to meet with the high representative of the EU, the French president, the German chancellor and the Italian prime minister in Brussels on 26 October. They held separate meetings that yielded no progress and both sides traded blame. In November, the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák, held meetings in Kosovo and in Serbia with their political representatives and other actors, as well as separate meetings with the chief negotiators in Brussels. In December, Kosovar government representatives said that the draft municipal association proposal was better than previous ones, while Kosovar opposition parties like DLK rejected the document. **Around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo warned of the profound impact that the violence of 24 September had on relations within and between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as the previously deteriorated context. In October, these civil society organisations jointly called for peacebuilding and the normalisation of relations**

Civil society organizations from Serbia and Kosovo called for more meaningful participation of women in the negotiations

in the region and urged the authorities at all levels to support the building of links and cooperation within and between Kosovo and Serbia.³⁸

Gender, peace and security

Around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo issued a joint letter on 8 March calling for the more meaningful participation of women in the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo.³⁹ In their letter, they expressed concern about the failure to incorporate gender-related considerations in the various agreements and specifically in the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia reached on 27 February. The letter calls for mainstreaming the gender perspective so that decisions made in the negotiating process consider women's needs and concerns. After a decade of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, the letter deplored that very few women have been able to participate in the process and warned that if women continue to be excluded, it will be detrimental to Serbia and Kosovo, as well as to the objectives expressed by the EU.

37 Prelec, Marko, "The best deal Kosovo and Serbia can get", *EUobserver*, 30 October 2023.

38 Vv.Aa., Renewing commitments to the cause of peace, 26 October 2023.

39 Vv.Aa., Women's voices for peace in Serbia and Kosovo, 8 March 2023.

6. Peace negotiations in the Middle East

- The Middle East was the scene of five peace processes and negotiations in 2023, accounting for 11% of all cases worldwide.
- The difficulties in reviving the deal on the Iranian nuclear programme became clear throughout 2023 amidst an impasse in the negotiations and rising tensions between the parties involved.
- In 2023, a series of factors encouraged expectations of a historic opportunity to address the Yemeni conflict, but by the end of the year the prospects were in doubt due to the regional impact of the Gaza crisis and the escalation in the Red Sea.
- Thirty years after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian-Israeli issue returned to the centre of international attention and various initiatives had not achieved a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year.
- In Syria, the different negotiating formats between multiple local, regional and international actors yielded no progress towards a political solution to the conflict.

This chapter analyses the main peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East throughout 2023. First, it presents the main characteristics and general trends of the negotiating processes in the region. Second, it studies the evolution of contexts during the year, including references to the gender perspective and implementation of the international agenda on women, peace and security. At the beginning of this chapter, a map is also presented identifying the countries of the Middle East that were the scene of negotiations in 2023.

Table 6.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Iran (nuclear programme)	Iran, France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, EU, USA ¹	UN
Israel – Palestine	Israel, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Authority (PA)	Qatar, Egypt, USA, France, UN, ² International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Palestine	Fatah, Hamas	Egypt, Türkiye
Syria	Government, political and armed opposition groups, regional and international actors ³	UN (Geneva process); Russia, Türkiye, Iran (Astana process with Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, UN and ICRC as observers); Arab League (Jordanian initiative)
Yemen	Internationally recognised Yemeni government (backed by Riyadh), Houthis / Ansar Allah, Saudi Arabia ⁴	ONU, Oman, ICRC

6.1 Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

This chapter analyses five negotiating processes that took place in 2023 in the Middle East and account for 11% of the peace processes worldwide that year. Three of the cases were linked to armed conflicts (Israel-Palestine, Syria and Yemen) and two were related to socio-political crises (the internal dispute between the Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah and

the development of the Iranian nuclear programme). Except for the Palestinian case (Hamas-Fatah), which was internal in nature, the rest were internationalised (Syria and Yemen) or international (Israel-Palestine and tension over the Iranian nuclear programme). In geographic terms, two cases were located in the Persian Gulf (Iran and Yemen) and three were in the Mashreq (Israel-Palestine, Palestine and Syria). In the previous edition of the yearbook, the case of Israel-Palestine had stopped being analysed as a peace process due to the chronic impasse in the negotiations, broken off

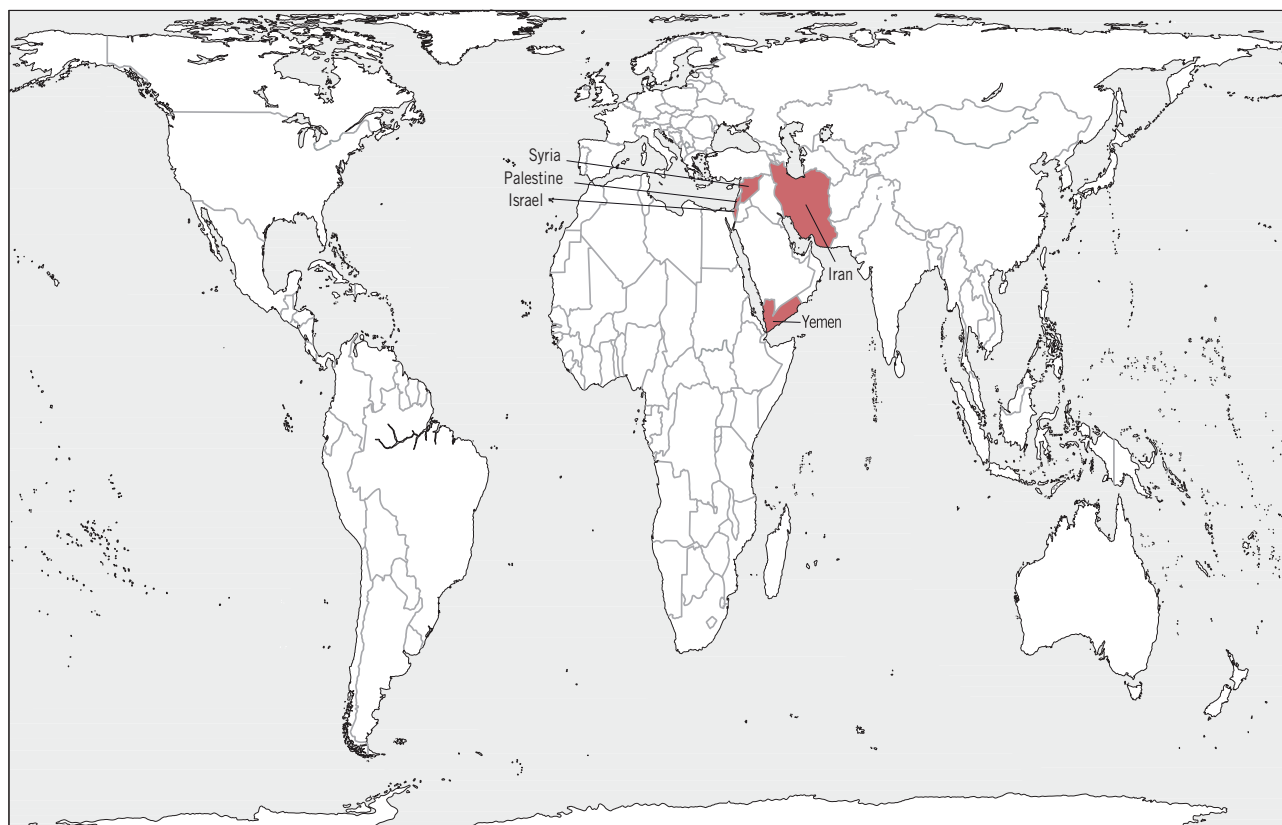
1 In 2018 the Trump administration decided to withdraw the US from the nuclear agreement and reimpose sanctions on Iran. The Biden administration has remained indirectly involved in the negotiating process with Tehran.

2 This table does not include the Middle East Peace Quartet -made up of the US, Russia, the UN and the EU- due to its inactivity in the field of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, especially since the increase in tensions between Washington and Moscow over the war in Ukraine. The last statement by the Quartet envoys dates back to the end of 2021. The Quartet Office remains operational in Jerusalem but focuses its activities on the part of its mandate related to supporting Palestinian economic and institutional development.

3 Although some regional and international actors present themselves as third parties, in practice they also operate as negotiators and favour understandings to ensure their presence and influence on Syrian soil.

4 Saudi Arabia also plays a role as a mediator/facilitator in disputes between various actors on the anti-Houthi side.

Map 6.1. Peace negotiations in the Middle East in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East in 2023.

since 2014, and the gradual exhaustion of the two-state formula amidst Israel's persistent occupation and annexation policies and its structural discrimination against the Palestinian population that was increasingly described as apartheid. After the events of 2023 and the crisis in Gaza, the case is being analysed again in this edition of the report to address the mediation attempts, the diplomatic initiatives, the dynamics that shaped the achievement of a ceasefire and some of the approaches to addressing the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the longer term, which among other proposals aim to revive the two-state path when the 30-year anniversary of the Oslo Accords is commemorated.

Governments were involved in all negotiating processes in the region, either through direct and formalised contact or indirectly with other actors, with states and/or with other types of armed and unarmed organisations, some of which operated as de facto governments in the land under their control. Despite the deadlock of the negotiations, the framework of the agreement on Tehran's nuclear programme continued in force during 2023, in which Iran participated along with the rest of the signatory countries (Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom and Germany) and the EU. The US, which abandoned the agreement in 2018 during the Trump administration, also maintained indirect contacts with Iran. The internationally recognised government of Yemen, supported by Riyadh, also remained involved in the UN-backed intra-Yemeni process, although the talks

between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, who control most of the north and centre of the country, took centre stage during 2023. The Israeli government maintained indirect contacts with Islamic Jihad for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in the first half of 2023 and with Hamas for dealing with the escalating situation starting in the last quarter. Hamas has controlled Gaza since 2007. Though limited, talks also continued between the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) and Hamas aimed at intra-Palestinian reconciliation to address the fracture and division between the West Bank and Gaza. The Syrian government also continued to participate in the different officially active formats for addressing the armed conflict, at least formally and with varying degrees of involvement (the UN-promoted Geneva process, the Astana process promoted by Russia, Türkiye and Iran and the new Amman track, which started in 2023 at the initiative of the Arab League). Unlike the previous year, Damascus' contacts with the Kurdish administration (AANES) that controls the northeast of the country were blocked in 2023. The case of Syria illustrates the fluid nature and diffuse roles played by some regional and international actors that are formally involved in mediation or facilitation efforts but in practice seek to prioritise their agendas and interests and/or ensure that their areas of influence are maintained.

As in previous years, the **significant influence of regional and international actors in the dynamics of the disputes and/or the prospects for negotiations** in the Middle

East was especially clear. This influence was the result of their direct or indirect participation in some of the armed conflicts that are the subject of negotiation or in attempts at mediation, their ability to sway some of the local actors involved in the respective disputes and/or their power and influence at a more general level in the regional and international scenario and in some of the dialogue and negotiating mechanisms or other types of diplomatic initiatives launched. **In 2023, an illustrative example of this dynamic was the repercussions that the announcement of rapprochement and subsequent reestablishment of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia had in various contexts.** The rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran based on contacts initially facilitated by Iraq and Oman ended up taking form after China got involved, which thereby demonstrated a greater role in the future of Middle Eastern affairs. This understanding between Iran and Saudi Arabia announced in March, seven years after their diplomatic break in a context of intense geopolitical conflicts and power struggles in the region, raised certain expectations due to its possible impacts on the situation in Yemen due to the role played by both actors in recent years in support of the rival sides. In fact, one of Riyadh's conditions for restoring relations with Iran was for Tehran to end its military support for the Houthis and influence their positions in the negotiating process. The rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran also encouraged some positive prospects for dialogue on Iran's nuclear programme, partly also because the announcement coincided with other developments, such as some limited progress in implementing Iran's commitments under the agreement overseen by the IAEA and indirect talks between Tehran and Washington mediated by Oman.

In a similar vein, according to various analysts, reports in the second half of the year indicating the possible establishment of formal relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel as part of the "normalisation" agreements promoted by the US may have also influenced Hamas' calculations to launch its attack in October to expose that it was not possible to reach this type of agreement in the region while ignoring the Palestinian issue. Another illustrative example of this dynamic in 2023 was Washington's positioning in the face of the escalation of violence in Israel-Palestine, the crisis in Gaza and the growing instability in the Middle East. The US was involved in the mediation attempts between Israel and Hamas, but it also gave political and military support to Netanyahu's government and exercised its veto power in the UN Security Council to ensure Israel's interests at the same time. This blocked the approval of a UN Security Council resolution that openly called for a ceasefire.

Following the trend of previous years, third parties were involved in all peace processes in the region, in

Third parties were involved in all peace processes in the region, in some cases with several different actors involved in mediation and facilitation efforts, either consecutively or simultaneously

some cases with several different actors involved in mediation and facilitation efforts, either consecutively or simultaneously. As a multilateral actor, the United Nations continued to be involved in these efforts through its special envoys for Syria and Yemen. Different figures also worked on the Palestinian-Israeli issue –in addition to the usual role of the envoy for the Middle East, the UN Secretary-General became actively involved in efforts to bring about a permanent ceasefire and ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian aid. UN activities focused on supervising the implementation of the 2015 agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and by monitoring the commitments made in the UN Security Council resolution to endorse it through periodic reports issued by the UN Secretary-General. In terms of regional organisations, the Arab League launched an initiative regarding the situation in Syria in 2023. Amidst greater contact with Bashar Assad's regime, especially after the earthquakes that rocked northern Syria in early 2023, the Arab League decided to readmit Damascus, which had been expelled from the regional forum in 2011 for its brutal repression of opposition protests. It also opened a channel of dialogue with Assad's regime for the stated purpose of addressing the Syrian crisis and all its repercussions, a move criticised by the Syrian opposition. According to various analysts, amidst international disinterest in the Syrian issue, the Arab countries prioritised their agendas: guaranteeing a certain level of stability in Syria, reducing the influence of Iran, achieving a solution for the situation of the Syrian refugee population in several countries of the region and stopping drug trafficking affecting the area.

As in previous years, **various countries in the region played an important role in mediating and facilitating talks between conflicting parties.** These included **Oman**, involved in the dialogue between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, and in indirect contacts between Washington and Tehran in 2023; **Qatar**, which played a prominent role in contacts between Hamas and Israel that led to a partial one-week truce, exchanges of hostages and prisoners and the temporary lifting of obstacles to accessing humanitarian aid; and **Egypt**, involved in Israel's truce with Islamic Jihad, in the meeting between Hamas and the PA to address intra-Palestinian reconciliation, in the attempts to achieve a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and in the new mechanism established by the Arab league to talk with the Syrian regime. Iraq and Jordan continued in their role as observers in the Astana process and also joined the Arab League's liaison team with Damascus. The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** has played a role in Yemen, in Syria and more recently in the agreement between Israel and Hamas, especially in matters of prisoners and in facilitating exchanges.

The subjects of the active negotiating agendas and processes in the Middle East in 2023 were varied, given the specific nature of the different contexts. However, three subjects were especially important for the armed conflicts. The first was the search for ceasefire agreements. It was a crucial issue in the Palestinian-Israeli context in the first half of the year, then after the significant escalation of violence starting in October, which activated several different diplomatic initiatives as the weeks passed and alarms about the serious humanitarian crisis and the commission of genocide in Gaza. A ceasefire was also important in the discussions about the future of Yemen, where a de facto cessation of hostilities was maintained during 2023, despite the breakdown of the UN-backed truce agreement. A second important issue, which remained central at the end of the year, was that of **prisoner exchanges**. The release of nearly 900 people in compliance with previous agreements and commitments by the parties marked a milestone in Yemen in 2023 and helped to raise certain expectations about the political process. In the last quarter of 2023, the issue of hostages and prisoners was also central to the negotiations between Israel and Hamas. The issue of prisoners has also been very important in the peace processes in Syria. Finally, the most pressing issues on the agenda in these three cases has also included **humanitarian challenges** and access to aid for the enormous needs of the civilian population. In Syria, this also resulted from the earthquakes that devastated the region.

In general, the **trend of the negotiations confirms the problems, obstacles and inertia faced by the various negotiating processes in the region, which make it difficult to achieve negotiated political solutions** to the armed conflicts and socio-political crises. **The events of 2023 also illustrate the interconnections between the dynamics of the various contexts** and how they not only impact levels of regional instability and volatility, but also the prospects for negotiation and moving forward on diplomatic tracks. The case that encouraged the greatest expectations during the year was that of Yemen, given the convergence of a series of factors: the reduction in levels of violence compared to previous years as a result of the de facto maintenance of the ceasefire reached in 2022, the exchange of a thousand prisoners as part of the provisions of previous agreements facilitated by the UN, the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the prospects of influence in the political process due to both countries' role in supporting different sides of the Yemeni conflict and progress in negotiations between Riyadh and the Houthis, mediated by Oman. This confluence of factors led to warnings about a "historic opportunity" to address the Yemeni dispute. At the end of the

Issues such as the search for ceasefires, prisoner exchanges and humanitarian challenges played a prominent role in the negotiating agendas in the region

The cases in the Middle East illustrated the problems, obstacles and inertia faced by various processes and the interconnections between the different cases, which shaped how the negotiations developed

year, the parties seemed to be committed to address a new nationwide ceasefire agreement and resume the UN-sponsored peace process. However, the future of the Yemeni process was in doubt due to the regional repercussions of the crisis in Gaza and the escalating tension in the Red Sea, where the Houthis assumed a leading role. The situation in Gaza also affected the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, which raised very few expectations before the events of October, and negatively influenced the context of negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme. Throughout 2023, the difficulties in reviving the Iranian nuclear deal became clearer amidst the impasse in the negotiations and growing tensions between the parties involved. Despite the various schemes formally established to address the conflict in Syria, there were no prospects for a political solution to the armed conflict in 2023, which was experiencing an escalation in violence by the year's end.

Some of the processes underway also revealed problems and challenges regarding **inclusivity**. In Yemen, for example, some warned of the risks that a possible agreement between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis would be reached to the detriment of other actors in Yemeni society. Analysts also warned of the marginalisation of local actors in Syria from the negotiating formats compared to the prioritisation of the interests of regional and international actors involved in the conflict.

In 2023, as in other years, **several different challenges for the equal and substantive participation of women also continued to be observed, especially in formal negotiating forums**. Yemeni women continued to complain of their exclusion from these areas and demanded to participate in discussions about the future of their country as a right, and not as a privilege. In meetings and exchanges during the year, they identified issues that they thought should be priorities in any possible agreement and confidence-building measures, while continuing their mediation efforts in resolving local disputes, reintegrating child soldiers, opening humanitarian corridors and documenting abuse, while taking the gender perspective into account. Women's participation in Syria continued to be affected by the deadlock in the negotiations, particularly the UN-backed Geneva process, where they had achieved 30% participation in the Constitutional Committee.

Beyond the cases analysed in this chapter, other dialogue initiatives were also carried out in the region in 2023. Thus, for example, after a year of preparations, an announced "national dialogue" was launched in Egypt in May, though it was subject to much criticism. The complaints highlighted its unilateral nature and the

fact that it was orchestrated by the government, with various analysts describing it as a “façade”, “political manoeuvring”, a “public relations stunt” and other things, denouncing that it was launched alongside the intensified persecution and arrest of opponents and activists, including some groups formally participating in the dialogue.

6.2 Case study analysis

Mashreq

Israel – Palestine	
Negotiating actors	Israel, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Authority (PA)
Third parties	Qatar, Egypt, USA, France, UN, ⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Relevant agreements	Israel – PLO Mutual Recognition (1993), Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo I Accords), Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area (Cairo Agreement) (1994), Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II) (1995), Wye River Memorandum (1998), Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (1999), Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (2003), Annapolis Conference Joint Understanding on Negotiations (2007)

Summary:

The Palestinian-Israeli peace process launched in the 1990s has not resulted in an agreement between the parties on the most complex issues borders, Jerusalem, settlements, Palestinian refugees and security or the creation of a Palestinian state. Since the timetable established by the Oslo Accords broke down a series of rounds of negotiation have been conducted and various proposals have been made, but they have all been unsuccessful. The peace process has developed amidst periodic outbursts of violence and alongside the fait accompli policies of Israel, including about its persisting occupation. These dynamics have created growing doubts about the viability of a two-state solution. Meanwhile, after periods of escalating violence, truce and cessation of hostilities agreements have been reached between the Israeli government and Palestinian armed actors.

Thirty years after the Oslo Accords were signed, the Palestinian-Israeli issue returned to the centre of international attention in 2023 due to a significant intensification of violence with serious repercussions in the Middle East region and beyond. Hamas’ unprecedented attack on various Israeli towns, which caused around 1,200 deaths and led to around 200 people being taken hostage, made 7 October the bloodiest day since the establishment of the state of

Israel. The attack sparked a retaliation by Israel of a nearly unparalleled magnitude in recent times that had caused the death of over 25,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and another 300 in the West Bank by the end of the year and in just three months. These events caused a flurry of diplomatic activity at various levels that barely yielded results by the end of the year, despite the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza and the growing evidence that acts of genocide were being committed against the Palestinian population.

Before the events of October, at least two previous dynamics were in play. The first was **Egypt’s intervention in May to achieve a ceasefire between Israel and Islamic Jihad**. The death of a spokesman for Islamic Jihad (Khader Adnan) after a nearly three-month hunger strike in protest of his detention without trial in Israel prompted the group to launch more than 100 rockets into Israel. The Netanyahu government responded with a new five-day operation in Gaza (Operation Shield and Arrow). The hostilities, in which Hamas was not involved, resulted in the deaths of 33 Palestinians and one Israeli and subsided after an agreement was brokered by Cairo on 13 May. These events occurred against a backdrop of increasing violence in the West Bank (the highest number of Palestinian deaths since 2005 had already been reported by mid-year) and growing criticism of the Palestinian Authority (PA) for its security agreements with Israel. The second was **information about a possible upcoming formal establishment of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia as part of the “normalisation”** agreements (Abraham Accords) with Arab countries promoted by the US under the Trump administration that the Biden administration continued to push. Washington also organised meetings between Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian representatives during the year, but after months of talks the priority was the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel in a context marked by shifting regional balances due to the thawing of relations between Riyadh and Tehran in March.

In September, in exchange for “normalisation”, Riyadh wanted a deal that included a security agreement with the United States, with fewer restrictions on US arms sales to the kingdom, assistance in the development of its own civil nuclear programme and progress in the creation of a Palestinian state. Senior Israeli officials assured that an agreement could be made in a few months, though **the Netanyahu government rejected any concessions to the Palestinian Authority (PA) or any freeze in settlement building as part of the “normalisation” with Riyadh**. Saudi Arabia had tried to gain the PA’s support for the initiative by offering to resume financial support. A Palestinian delegation reportedly travelled to Riyadh in August to present their demands, which according to media reports included

⁵ This table does not include the Middle East Peace Quartet -made up of the US, Russia, the UN and the EU- due to its inactivity in the field of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, especially since the increase in tensions between Washington and Moscow over the war in Ukraine. The last statement by the Quartet envoys dates back to the end of 2021. The Quartet Office remains operational in Jerusalem but focuses its activities on the part of its mandate related to supporting Palestinian economic and institutional development.

more control over parts of the West Bank, the reopening of the US consulate in East Jerusalem and Washington's support for full Palestinian representation in the UN. The PA's requests demonstrated a change since its reaction to the announcement of the other normalisation agreements, when it accused the Arab countries signing it of betrayal. Although it was not the first agreement of its kind with Israel (the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco signed it in 2020 and Sudan in 2021), a possible deal with Saudi Arabia potentially had greater political and symbolic weight. In 2002, Riyadh had been the promoter of the Arab Peace Initiative (or Saudi Initiative), which made the normalisation of relations with Israel and the recognition of its right to exist depend on its withdrawal from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and the Golan Heights in Syria. Therefore, beyond the motivations that Hamas publicly acknowledged for its attack on 7 October, some analysts argued that the Palestinian group also intended to react to these regional dynamics and assert that it was not possible to reach agreements with Israel by excluding the Palestinian issue.

Following the events of October, various channels were activated. In late October, Qatari mediation efforts achieved the release of four Israeli women hostages, but it was not until the end of November that Qatar brokered a week-long truce (between 24 and 30 November) with the support of Egypt and the United States. Indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas then led to an agreement to temporarily suspend hostilities for an initial period of four days, in which 50 hostages would be released in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners, while access to fuel and humanitarian aid would be given to the Gaza Strip. The mechanism was designed to promote a renewal of the deal, which was extended first for 48 hours and then for another 24 hours, or three days in total, despite mutual accusations of violations of the cessation of hostilities. With the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), more than 100 hostages held by Hamas (86 Israelis and 24 foreigners) were finally released during the week and nearly 240 Palestinian women and minors were freed, many of them kept in prison by Israel under the controversial label of "administrative detention". Qatar continued with its diplomatic efforts, but it had not reached a new deal by the end of the year. It was not until mid-January 2024 that Doha announced a limited agreement, reached with the help of France, by which Israel pledged to allow the entry of medicine and other basic supplies to the Gaza Strip in exchange for Hamas promising that the hostages it held would be able to receive medical treatment.

In addition to the attempts at mediation between Hamas and Israel, the situation in Gaza prompted intense diplomatic debates within the United Nations

The renewed debates on the two-state formula coincided with critical assessments of the international approach to the conflict three decades after the Oslo agreements

Egypt, another regular mediator between Israel and Hamas, also became involved in mediation efforts and organised a high-level diplomatic meeting (peace summit) in late October that was attended by representatives of several countries (including

Germany, China, Spain, the USA, France, Jordan, the United Kingdom, Russia, South Africa and Qatar), the EU, the UN and the PA, but not Israel. The summit was held amidst speculation about the Israeli authorities' intention to forcibly expel the Palestinian population to Egypt and Jordan, a possibility that both countries rejected. Various analyses highlighted that Cairo's priority was to avoid the repercussions of the crisis in Gaza on its territory, in particular the arrival of the refugee population and the reactivation of armed groups in the Sinai. According to reports, **by the end of the year Egypt was working on a proposal with three interconnected phases.** The first would be a two-week truce to allow the release of part of the hostages held by Hamas (40) in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners (120). The second phase included a Palestinian national dialogue to resolve internal divisions between the different factions, establish a technocratic government that would take over the government of Gaza and the West Bank, supervise the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and move towards holding the postponed presidential and parliamentary elections (the last ones were held 15 years ago, in 2006).⁶ The third phase of the plan would aim for a permanent ceasefire, an end to Israel's attacks on Gaza and the withdrawal of its military forces from the Strip. In early 2024, however, Egypt decided to (temporarily) suspend its mediating role after the assassination of Hamas' second-in-command, Saleh al-Aroui, in an attack attributed to Israel that occurred in southern Lebanon.

In addition to the attempts at mediation between Hamas and Israel, the situation in Gaza prompted intense diplomatic debates within the United Nations. Amidst growing political tensions, **the exercise and threat of a veto by the US was crucial for defending Israel's position and interests.** The United States and European countries refused to publicly demand a ceasefire to refrain from challenging the Israeli government's claims to its alleged "right to self-defence". However, the substance and form of this argument was questioned by other international actors and experts

in international law who objected to Israel's military offensive in Gaza according to this right because it is a territory occupied and controlled by Israel. Since October, both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security

6 See the summary on Palestine in this chapter.

Council have held meetings to address the Palestinian-Israeli and Middle East issues. **The UN Security Council met at least 15 times and considered many draft resolutions, but only approved two.** The first, Resolution 2712, approved on 15 November, was limited to calling for “establishing pauses and humanitarian corridors in Gaza for a sufficient number of days” to allow access to aid and secure the unconditional release of the hostages. In December, after the collapse of the truce agreement between Israel and Hamas, **António Guterres invoked Article 99 of the United Nations Charter**, which empowers the UN Secretary-General to draw the attention of the Security Council to matters threatening international peace and security and has only been used exceptionally in the history of the UN, **to demand a “humanitarian ceasefire” and “avoid a catastrophe”.** However, the proposed resolution presented to the UN Security Council two days later was sunk by Washington’s veto. After several postponements and changes to avoid a new US veto, UNSC Resolution 2720 was approved on 22 December, with the US and Russia abstaining, which repeats the demand to release the hostages and calls on the parties “to take urgent steps to allow safe, expanded and unhindered access to humanitarian aid and to create the conditions for a cessation of hostilities”. In late December, **the government of South Africa chose to appeal to the highest UN justice body, the International Court of Justice (based in The Hague) to denounce the growing evidence of genocide by Israel against the Palestinian population** and try to get the court to prescribe precautionary measures, including a ceasefire order.

The drift of events triggered a discussion about different short- and medium-term future scenarios, both for Gaza and for the more general approach to the Palestinian-Israeli issue. In this scenario, various actors insisted on the two-state solution as the only way to resolve the conflict, including the UN Secretary-General, the United States and the EU (in late October, the European Council accepted Spain’s proposal to hold an international peace conference based on this formula). Washington approved of this option and of the PA assuming control of Gaza, but the Netanyahu government made it clear that it intended to control the entire territory and, in line with positions expressed for years, that it was opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. **The fresh debates on the viability of the two-state formula coincided with criticism of the lack of international commitment and desire to address the conflict three decades after the Oslo Accords**, a period in which, among other dynamics, Palestinian territory has increasingly fragmented, Israeli settlements have multiplied (from nearly 200,000 in the early 1990s to over 700,000 in 2023) and the dispossession of and structural discrimination against the Palestinian population has worsened in a context of impunity, despite increasing descriptions of it as apartheid.

Palestine	
Negotiating actors	Hamas, Fatah
Third parties	Egypt, Türkiye
Relevant agreements	Mecca Agreement (2007), Cairo agreement (2011), Doha agreement (2012), Beach Refugee Camp agreement (2014)

Summary:

Since the start of the confrontation between Hamas and Fatah, which materialized as of 2007 with a de facto separation between Gaza and the West Bank, several mediation initiatives have been launched in an attempt to reduce tensions and promote an approximation between these two Palestinian formations. It was not until May 2011 that the confluence of several factors –including the deadlock in negotiations between the PA and Israel, changes in the region as a result of the Arab revolts and the pressure exerted by the Palestinian public opinion– facilitated the signing of a reconciliation agreement between the parties. The diverging opinions between Hamas and Fatah on key issues have hampered the implementation of this agreement, which aims at establishing a unity government, the celebration of legislative and presidential elections, and reforming the security forces. Successive agreements have been announced between both parties since, but they have not been implemented.

For most of 2023, the dynamics of delayed intra-Palestinian reconciliation followed the same trend as in previous years, with limited contacts and low expectations. Yet in the last quarter, the prospects changed completely and were shaped as a result of the very serious situation in Gaza and its different derivations, including political ones. The most notable event in the first few months of 2023 was the **high-level meeting between Hamas and Fatah held in late July to address delayed intra-Palestinian reconciliation.** Unlike 2022, when the rapprochement between the parties was promoted by Algeria, this time it was Egypt that pushed and hosted the initiative, another common mediator between both factions. Türkiye also attempted to facilitate rapprochement during the year.

The meeting took place in the city of El Alamein, on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, and was attended by both the leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, and the top leader of Fatah and president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmoud Abbas. A couple of days earlier, both Palestinian leaders had met in Ankara with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Abbas and Haniyeh had not had a public meeting for a year; in July 2022, they had met in Algeria for the first time in five years. Representatives of most Palestinian political groups also attended the meeting in El Alamein. One of the exceptions was Islamic Jihad, which said it would only attend following the release of the organisation’s prisoners detained by PA security forces in the West Bank. During the meeting, Ismail Haniyeh called on

Abbas to stop political arrests and end collaboration with Israel on security matters. The Hamas leader also stressed the importance of forming a new Parliament through free and democratic elections. Abbas praised the meeting as a first step to continue the dialogue with a view to achieving Palestinian national unity and thereby ending the 17 years of separation. The Fatah leader emphasised the need to return to having “a single state, a single system, a single law and a single legitimate army” and announced the formation of a committee to continue the dialogue. The disagreements between both leaders were clear around some issues such as the PLO (Haniyeh urged the restructuring of this platform in which most Palestinian factions participate, but not Hamas and Islamic Jihad) and around how the Palestinian resistance should take shape. Abbas called for “peaceful popular resistance”, while Haniyeh advocated “comprehensive resistance”. The meeting took place amidst an intensification of violence, especially in the West Bank, where by mid-year the deaths of over 200 Palestinians had already been reported in actions by Israeli military forces and settlers. Various analysts indicate this violence had intensified criticism of the PA by groups complaining of its inaction, inability to protect the population and its collaboration with Israel.

After the meeting in El Alamein, various observers noted the lack of expectations about the results of the dialogue and about the possibility that the meeting in Egypt and the announced committee would lead to intra-Palestinian reconciliation or to the announcement of a schedule for new elections. In April 2021, the president of the PA called off what would have been the first Palestinian elections in 15 years. After the meeting in El Alamein, analysts said that Abbas and his political group, Fatah, would surely continue to postpone the elections since polls indicated that Hamas would obtain the highest percentage of votes if they were held. According to a study by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) published in June, in a legislative election Hamas would receive 34% of the votes, compared to 31% for Fatah, and in a hypothetical presidential election between Abbas and Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 33% compared to 56% for Haniyeh. In addition to these polls, analysts said that another indicator of this trend was the triumph of the Islamist group’s lists in the student council elections in universities in the West Bank (at Birzeit University in Ramallah in 2022, and at the An-Najah National University in Nablus in 2023). In line with previous studies, the PCPSR poll also found a decline in Fatah’s popularity in both the West Bank and Gaza and great disapproval of Abbas: 80% of the people surveyed thought he should resign. Likewise, the proportion of the Palestinian population that believes that the PA exists to serve Israeli interests and that its dissolution could help the Palestinian

cause has increased. According to the PCPSR opinion study carried out to mark the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, internal division was an issue of special concern for the Palestinian population, according to which the split between the West Bank and Gaza was the most damaging event since 1948.

Starting in the last quarter, the debates on the intra-Palestinian political struggles were overshadowed and shaped by events after the 7 October attack by Hamas, the Israeli retaliation and the very serious situation in Gaza and in the West Bank at the end of the year. The Israeli government explicitly declared its intention to eradicate Hamas and to not allow it to continue controlling the Gaza Strip. Other actors, such as the US, proposed that in the future the PA could assume control of Gaza as part of a plan aimed at restoring the two-state formula as a long-term solution. **Abbas did not rule out the possibility of regaining control of the Gaza Strip, though he did link it to a broader approach to the conflict that would also address the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.** However, various analysts say it would be difficult for the PA to control Gaza, not only due to the impossibility of eradicating Hamas as Israel wishes, but also due to the weakness of the PA itself, which is increasingly questioned and perceived as autocratic and corrupt. Alongside intense debates about possible short- and medium-term scenarios in Gaza, there were indications that recent events had boosted Hamas’ popularity, as it was seen as willing to confront Israel, and sharpened criticism of the PA and Abbas among the Palestinian population. According to a new PCPSR study published in December 2023, levels of support for Hamas had risen in both Gaza and the West Bank (42% and 44% support, respectively), while 90% wanted Abbas to resign, 10 points more than months before.

At the end of the year, Fatah publicly underlined the need to achieve unity with Hamas and said that national dialogue was the way to reach a consensus on how to govern and present the Palestinian cause to the world. In this context, Fatah reportedly asked Türkiye for support to act as a mediator and try to revive reconciliation efforts. Egypt was also reportedly attempting to mediate between Israel and Palestinian factions and had outlined a three-phase plan that included a Palestinian national dialogue aimed at resolving internal divisions, the establishment of a technocratic government in Gaza and the West Bank, oversight of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and work towards the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections. Delegations from Hamas and Islamic Jihad were in Egypt in December. Meanwhile, media reports echoed **internal struggles and tensions within both Hamas and Fatah regarding the strategies to follow in the new context.**

Syria	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and armed opposition groups, regional and international actors ⁷
Third parties	UN (Geneva process), Russia, Türkiye, Iran (Astana process, with Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and the ICRC as observers), Arab League (Jordanian initiative)
Relevant agreements	Geneva Communiqué from the Action Group for Syria (2012); UNSC Resolution 2254 in support of the International Syria Support Group Roadmap for a Peace Process (Vienna Statements (2015))

Summary:

Given the serious consequences of the armed conflict in Syria and amidst concern about the regional repercussions of the crisis, various regional and international actors have tried to facilitate a negotiated solution and commit the parties to a cessation of hostilities. However, regional actors' and international powers' different approaches to the conflict, together with an inability to reach consensus in the UN Security Council, have hindered the possibilities of opening the way to a political solution. After a brief and failed attempt by the Arab League, the UN took the lead in the mediation efforts, led by special envoys Kofi Annan (2012), Lakhdar Brahimi (2012-2014), Staffan de Mistura (2014-2018) and Geir Pedersen (since 2018). Other initiatives have come from the EU, United States, Russia and leaders of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). In 2015, the ISSG peace talks in Vienna -led by Washington and Moscow and in which twenty countries and international organizations participated- resulted in a peace plan for Syria that was endorsed by Security Council resolution 2254 the ONU. As of 2017, in parallel to the UN-led Geneva process - which has included intra-Syrian talks promoted by De Mistura- a new channel began: the Russian-backed Astana process, which also involve Türkiye and Iran. In 2023, the Arab League began a new attempt to get involved in addressing the Syrian crisis. The various rounds of negotiations held since the beginning of the armed conflict have shown the deep differences between the parties and have not been able to halt the high levels of violence in the country.

The Syrian conflict's formal forums for negotiations, the Geneva and Astana processes, remained open during the year, though the former was practically blocked and the latter had limited activity. Meanwhile, a new forum was launched between Damascus and Arab countries, the Amman (Jordan) track, which ended up leading to Syria rejoining the Arab League. Yet by the end of the year, these various processes did not offer any prospects for a political solution to the armed conflict, which reported an escalation in violence in the last months of 2023. **In the UN-led Geneva process, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen's different contacts and meetings with various actors did not lead to any progress.** Despite Pedersen's attempts to reactivate the negotiating process, **in 2023 no meeting was held with the Constitutional Committee in charge of drafting a new proposed Constitution** in line with the provisions of UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015). This marked the end of more than a year of impasse in the Committee, mainly

due to the lack of involvement of the Assad regime, which was more active in the other two formats (Astana and Amman). The last meeting involving delegations from the opposition and the Syrian government took place in June 2022 and concluded without progress. As part of its strategic relationship with Russia, Damascus then demanded a change of venue for the meetings amidst accusations that Switzerland was no longer neutral due to its support for sanctions against the Kremlin for the war in Ukraine. The Geneva negotiation path is the only one that has the explicit support of Western actors such as the US, the United Kingdom and EU countries. However, neither the US nor the EU included dealing with Syria among their international policy priorities and although rhetorically they insist on the importance of maintaining the Geneva process as an important forum for dialogue, global geopolitical tensions, particularly between Washington and Moscow, have also had an impact on its viability, which is why it is increasingly being described as a failed process.

In the first few months of 2023, much of the diplomatic activity was oriented towards humanitarian issues due to the serious consequences of the earthquake on 6 February that devastated Türkiye and northwestern Syria, the latter controlled by forces opposing Assad. The regime attempted to take advantage of the impact of the earthquake to rehabilitate itself internationally and control humanitarian aid flows and benefited from a partial lifting of sanctions. In this context, Assad visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), had a telephone conversation with the King of Jordan and received a visit from the Egyptian Foreign Minister in the highest-ranking visit by a representative of Cairo since 2011. Saudi Arabia even decided to reopen its embassy in Damascus. Diplomatic contacts between the Syrian regime and several Arab countries accelerated after the earthquake as part of rapprochements that had begun in 2018. **In April and May 2023, representatives of several states in the region met to discuss an initiative led by Arab countries aimed at addressing the Syrian crisis. What is now known as the "Jordan initiative" first convened the foreign ministers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria in Amman and paved the way for the subsequent readmission of Damascus into the Arab League,** from which it had been expelled in 2011 due to its brutal repression of anti-government protests. The decision to allow Syria to rejoin this regional organisation was taken on 7 May during an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Arab League in Cairo that discussed the need to take "practical and effective" action to move towards resolving the Syrian crisis through a step-by-step approach within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Through its own resolution (8914), **the Arab League decided to establish a ministerial liaison committee made up of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit to maintain dialogue with the Damascus regime**

⁷ Although some regional and international actors present themselves as third parties, in practice they also operate as negotiators and promote understandings to guarantee their presence and influence in Syrian territory.

and reach a global solution to the Syrian crisis and all its repercussions. Two weeks later, on 19 May, Assad participated in the Arab League summit held in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia).

According to several analysts, the change in position towards Damascus by countries in the region can be explained by an interest in guaranteeing a certain degree of stability in Syria amidst chronic impasse in the political process and the weakness of the regime, and especially a desire to reduce the growing influence of Iran. Several countries in the region also hope to address the issue of the Syrian refugees and promote their return home and to halt growing drug trafficking. Regarding the latter, their main concern is the huge amounts of drugs leaving Syria with the complicity of the regime, and particularly “captagon”, a highly addictive synthetic drug that is wreaking havoc in countries of the Persian Gulf. In general, the attempt to “re-regionalise” the Syrian issue has also been interpreted

as a response to the West’s limited commitment to addressing the crisis and the ineffectiveness of the conflict resolution mechanisms employed thus far. It has also been part of a more general trend to normalise relations between various Arab countries after years of tension and confrontation.⁸ Various actors, including Syrian opposition representatives, blasted the Arab League’s decision to readmit Damascus, considering it a betrayal of the victims of the crimes of the Assad regime. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria also highlighted the scant reference in the Arab League’s approach to the many human rights violations that have been widely documented in recent years and are one of the central elements of the conflict.⁹ In a similar vein, others pointed out that this pragmatic approach had left out the deep causes of the conflict and that it would surely open a new chapter to it, rather than guarantee its end. Some analysts thought that the Arab League’s initiative would have a partial impact, considering the Arab countries’ limited ability to influence Damascus, the unlikely distancing between Damascus and Tehran and the organisation’s own history, which has shown a limited ability to address some of the main regional challenges due to their internal divisions.¹⁰

Alongside these dynamics, the Astana process remained active throughout 2023. Begun in 2017, it is led by Russia, Iran and Türkiye, countries with a direct military presence in Syria. This format is perceived

as a mechanism that has essentially been used to normalise its main promoters’ military presence in Syria and minimise friction between them. In general terms, the Astana format has also received criticism from the start from Syrians and Syrian opposition groups, who consider it a forum where external actors impose their interests at the expense of the aspirations of the Syrian population. According to some analysts, there is also disillusionment among Syrians with some political and military leaders of the Syrian opposition, whom they

accuse of having given in to pressure from Türkiye and Russia and of compromising the objectives of the revolt.¹¹ As part of this format, Turkish, Iranian, Russian and Syrian government representatives held meetings between defence ministers in April 2023 and between foreign ministers in May 2023, both in Moscow. There was also a meeting on 20 June, the twentieth and only round of the Astana process in 2023, held in Kazakhstan on 20 and 21 June (the previous year there had been two rounds and the last one had taken place

in November 2022). The Astana process continued to involve Jordan, Iraq, the United Nations and the ICRC as observers. At the end of the June round, Kazakhstan surprisingly announced that the Astana process had achieved its objectives and could be concluded, noting the end of Syria’s isolation in the region as evidence, and said that it would not continue to host meetings for the format. However, Türkiye, Russia and Iran insisted that the talks would continue and that there would be a new round at the end of the year. Yet by the end of 2023, there had been no new meeting, nor any information about any city that would host one.

The official statement after the twentieth round in Astana highlighted the progress made in preparing a road map for reestablishing relations between Türkiye and Syria amidst rapprochement between Ankara and Damascus that has been observed since mid-2022, when Recep Tayyip Erdogan said ahead of elections that he intended to repair relations with Syria and even hold a meeting with Assad. Bilateral relations between both countries in the context of the armed conflict (Türkiye has supported Syrian opposition actors for more than a decade) was also a main topic of discussion during Assad’s visit to Moscow in March, given Russian interest in facilitating this political shift. However, 2023 ended without any news or concrete steps in this area. Various analysts cited the obstacles to this bilateral approach, considering the respective priorities and interests and the difficulties in making them compatible. To normalise

The Arab League readmitted Syria into the regional organisation and activated a track to try to address the conflict and move its priorities forward amidst impasse in other mechanisms

8 Middle East Policy Council, “Syria Normalization Faces Challenges in the Region and Beyond”, *Breaking Analysis*, 12 September 2023; Saban Kardas and Bulent Aras, “What Drove Syria Back into the Arab Fold?”, *Middle East Policy Council*, Fall 2023, 1 September 2023.

9 Human Rights Council, *Informe de la Comisión Internacional Independiente de Investigación sobre la República Árabe Siria*, A/HRC/54/58, 14 August 2023.

10 There was also no complete consensus on the reestablishment of relations with Syria (Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Bahrain and the UAE approved; Qatar was against it, but did not veto, though it refused to meet with Assad; Saudi Arabia had doubts, but it ended up leading the readmission process)

11 Faysal Abbas Mohamad, “The Astana Process Six Years On: Peace or Deadlock in Syria?”, *Sada*, 1 August 2023.

relations, Syria demanded the end of Ankara's support for Syrian opposition groups and a total withdrawal of Turkish military troops from the north of the country (estimated at 10,000). The Turkish government rejected these conditions. According to some analysts, Ankara's priorities include the issue of the refugee population (Türkiye hosts more than three million Syrians and does not want new flows into its territory) and Kurdish autonomy in northeastern Syria, which it perceives as an existential threat. Analysts indicate that the Turkish government is sceptical about Damascus' ability and willingness to address its concerns, meaning to prevent possible attacks from northeastern Syria and to challenge Kurdish autonomy, and to guarantee that there will be no further flows of refugees into Türkiye in case Damascus regains control of areas currently held by the Syrian opposition in the northwest. Erdogan's re-election in mid-2023 seemed to have diminished the urgency in establishing a substantive dialogue with Damascus, although the 2024 municipal elections in Türkiye suggested that the issue would continue to occupy a prominent place on the agenda. From Assad's point of view, the end of Syria's isolation from the Arab world diminished the importance of a political reconciliation with Türkiye.

A final dynamic to consider regards the meetings between Damascus and the Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria, known as the AANES, which is supported by the United States. Several meetings were held between the parties in 2023, but **in April Kurdish sources reported that contact with the Assad government had ended, so a proposal presented by the AANES** in April to address the distribution of resources (mainly hydrocarbons and grain in areas under the control of the Kurdish forces) and the autonomy of the region could not be considered. As part of regional changes and the normalisation of relations between Syria and Arab countries, the Kurdish administration publicly reaffirmed its willingness to negotiate with Damascus and other Syrian actors. **According to reports, Kurdish representatives had tried to get the UAE to mediate and facilitate dialogue with the Assad regime.** The military leader of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Mazloum Abdi, allegedly travelled to Abu Dhabi for this purpose, though UAE authorities have denied it. While returning to the AANES-controlled area from Iraq, the Kurdish military leader targeted by a Turkish drone attack. Türkiye has vetoed Syrian Kurdish representatives' involvement in the Geneva process and the three promoters of the Astana process have periodically rejected Kurdish self-government initiatives in northeastern Syria, which they describe as an attempt to create de facto realities. In media statements, Kurdish sources also expressed

concern about the lower level of commitment and support from the US during 2023. **At the end of the year, the UN special envoy maintained contacts with the parties involved in the different formats and warned that the status quo in Syria was not sustainable since the lack of political progress raised the risks of greater escalation of violence in the country,** in a regional scenario of greater instability due to the repercussions of the situation in Gaza.

Gender, peace and security

The possibilities of **women's participation in political dialogue initiatives on the future of Syria continued to be affected by the deadlock in the negotiations, particularly the Geneva process.** Women represent 29% of the delegates in the Constitutional Committee and during the eight previous debates, which ended more than a year ago, in June 2022, they have raised issues related to the rights and political participation of women, female quotas, non-discrimination, gender violence and the importance of considering women's needs and priorities in defining the future of the country. UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) also calls for the effective participation of Syrian women in the political process. Under this framework and in line with the international agenda on women, peace and security, the office of the UN special envoy for Syria has attempted to maintain regular contact with Syrian women who participate in the Constitutional Committee and who are part of an advisory council mechanism, the Women's Advisory Board, as well as with Syrian women who are in Türkiye, Lebanon, northern Iraq and Syria. At a meeting in August, the UN Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security said that these contacts have enabled exchanges not only on gender equality issues, but also on issues related to sovereignty, equality and equal citizenship, pluralism and diversity, civic space, protection, local administration and decentralisation, transparency and accountability, re-establishing regional contacts with Syria and protection-related concerns for the safe and voluntary return of the refugee population. The issue of detained, kidnapped, missing and unaccounted persons remained a top priority for Syrian women.

During 2023, **the WAB continued to meet with Pedersen and his team. It was also subject to some criticism due to its degree of representativeness,** to the point that some suggest that it should not be hastily replicated as a mechanism for including women.¹² In this context, the office of the UN envoy for Syria activated a call to renew the members of this forum. After eight years, the aim is to

12 Marie Joëlle Zahar, "Seeking Inclusion, Breeding Exclusion? The UN's WPS Agenda and the Syrian Peace Talks", *International Negotiation*, 4 May 2023.

begin a rotation process that allows more Syrian women to be part of the WAB and influence the political process facilitated by the UN. During 2023, UN Women also stressed the importance of giving stronger support for the participation of Syrian women in track 2 and 3 diplomatic initiatives, such as those dedicated to community mediation, and of holding talks at the local level.

The Gulf

Iran (nuclear programme)	
Negotiating actors	Iran, France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, EU, USA ¹³
Third parties	UN
Relevant agreements	Joint Plan of Action (provisional agreement, 2013), Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015)

Summary:

Under scrutiny by the international community since 2002, the Iranian nuclear programme has become one of the main sources of tension between Iran and the West, particularly affecting Iran's relationship with the United States and Israel. After more than a decade of negotiations, and despite the fact that various proposals were made to resolve the conflict, the parties failed to reach an agreement and remained almost unchanged in their positions. The US, Israel and several European countries remained distrustful of Tehran and convinced of the military objectives of its atomic programme, whilst Iran continued to insist that its nuclear activities were strictly for civilian purposes and in conformance with international regulations. In this context, the Iranian atomic programme continued to develop whilst the UN Security Council, US and EU imposed sanctions on Iran and threats of military action were made, mainly by Israel. Iran's change of government in 2013 favoured substantive talks on nuclear issues, facilitated new rounds of negotiations led to the signing of an agreement in 2015 aimed at halting the Iranian atomic programme in exchange for lifting the sanctions. Negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme have been met with resistance by Israel, certain countries such as Saudi Arabia and groups in the United States in a context marked by historical distrust, questions of sovereignty and national pride, disparate geopolitical and strategic interests, regional struggles and more.

During 2023, contacts continued as part of the 2015 agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), although **the difficulties in reviving it became clearer throughout the year amidst an impasse in the negotiations and growing tensions between the parties involved.** Since the US Trump administration announced it was withdrawing from the agreement in 2018 and reimposing unilateral sanctions on Iran, Tehran has remained formally committed to it. However, in recent years it has taken

The accusations levelled against Iran for its atomic activities came alongside growing criticism and action against Tehran for its harsh repression on the internal opposition

action that transgresses the limits established in the agreement and hinders the external supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) aimed at confirming the peaceful nature of its atomic programme.

After the negotiations were blocked in November 2022, IAEA Director Rafael Grossi kicked off 2023 warning that the constant violation of the limits established in the JCPOA was turning it into an empty agreement and that it was essential not to allow a political vacuum to develop around such a delicate issue. Meanwhile, CIA Director William J. Burns warned about the level of development of the Iranian nuclear programme. **The accusations levelled against Iran for its atomic activities came alongside growing criticism and action against Tehran for its harsh repression of the internal opposition** in the country, which intensified after the death in police custody of a young Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, in September 2022. Throughout the year, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and the EU announced sanctions against individuals and bodies of the regime for their links to human rights abuses, as well as for other reasons, including some related to military and ballistic programmes and the provision of military material to Russia, especially drones used in Ukraine. The latter was described as a violation of the restrictions established in UNSC Resolution 2231, which formalised the UN's support for the JCPOA. Nevertheless, the commitment to address the nuclear issue through diplomatic channels continued. In February, an IAEA report indicated that the agency had detected traces of 83.7% enriched uranium at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, which Iran claimed was an accident. During a visit by Grossi to Tehran, Iran and the IAEA then announced a commitment to allow the international agency to install cameras and other devices to support its verification and monitoring activities. The announcement allowed Iran to avoid a fresh rebuke from the IAEA Governing Council, though the US and the three European states involved in the JCPOA (France, the United Kingdom and Germany, known as the E3) repeated their concern about Iranian atomic activities. In May, an IAEA technical report confirmed that the explanations for the origin of the 83.7% enriched uranium particles were consistent and that it had no further questions on the matter at the time.

Between March and June, the IAEA noted some "limited progress" in implementing the commitments. This coincided with other important events, including the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia announced in March and the indirect talks between Tehran and Washington mediated by Oman in May. These contacts were reflected by a certain détente in

¹³ In 2018 the Trump administration decided to withdraw the US from the nuclear agreement and reimpose sanctions on Iran. The Biden administration has remained indirectly involved in the negotiating process with Tehran.

the following months and raised expectations for their possible repercussions on the nuclear talks. In July, the US approved a temporary sanctions waiver to allow payments from Iraq to Iran for electricity supplies on the condition that the resources were used for humanitarian issues. In August, US media outlets reported that Tehran had reduced the growth of uranium reserves at their highest levels and that incidents between US forces and pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria had decreased, after having intensified in the previous months. **In mid-September, the US and Iran reached a bilateral agreement under which Tehran freed five US citizens imprisoned in Iran in exchange for Tehran's access to \$6 billion in oil revenues that were held in South Korean bank accounts, which were transferred to accounts in Qatar and could be used for humanitarian purposes.** The deal also reportedly included informal agreements to ease tensions between US forces and pro-Iranian militias in the region. Starting in October, however, **expectations about the evolution of these contacts were directly affected by the events in Gaza, given Iran's political and economic support for Hamas and Washington's unconditional support for Israel.** Thus, the US and Qatar agreed to temporarily block Tehran's access to funds while tensions rose between Washington and all the groups in Iran's orbit in the region.

The difficulties in reviving the Iranian nuclear programme became clearer throughout the year amidst an impasse in the negotiations and growing tensions between the parties involved

During the second half of the year, the outlook for nuclear dialogue also worsened due to other variables. In mid-September, the director of the IAEA reported that Iran had withdrawn authorisation from one third of the most experienced inspectors to perform their verification activities, which Grossi described as disproportionate and unprecedented. Although Iran is allowed to withdraw authorisation under the JCPOA, Grossi warned that the decision compromised the agency's effective ability to conduct its inspections. The United States and the E3 countries issued a joint statement calling on Iran to reverse the move and fully cooperate with the IAEA. In October, the United States announced new sanctions on individuals and bodies linked to Iran's ballistic missile and drone programme over alleged transfers to Hamas and Russia. The EU and the United Kingdom also decided to uphold the restrictions through their own sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile programme, which according to UNSC Resolution 2231 expired on 18 October 2023, arguing for Iran's non-compliance since 2019. Iran described the decision unilateral, illegal and politically unjustifiable. **In its November technical report, the IAEA stated that inspection activities had been seriously compromised by Iran's failure to implement its commitments under the JCPOA and noted that it had not been able to verify Iran's total enriched uranium stockpiles since February 2021.**

Given this scenario, some analysts thought that Tehran's non-compliance with the JCPOA could motivate (though not imminently) some members of the UN Security Council to initiate a procedure to overturn UNSC Resolution 2231 and decree that the agreement is no longer viable. This mechanism, which is not subject to a veto, would restore the UN sanctions that were in force before the agreement was signed. In his biannual report on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2231, published in mid-December, **UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted the stalled diplomatic efforts and insisted that the JCPOA remained the best option available to guarantee the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme and non-proliferation and security in the region.** Given this, Guterres called on Tehran to refrain from taking new steps that would distance it from implementing the agreement and to reverse the action that it has been taking outside the plan since July 2019. The UN Secretary-General also urged the US to lift sanctions on Iran in line with what is established in the agreement and extend exemptions related to its oil trade.

Yemen		
Negotiating actors	Internationally recognised	Yemeni government (backed by Riyadh), Houthis / Ansar Allah, Saudi Arabia ¹⁴
Third parties	UN, Oman, ICRC	
Relevant agreements	Stockholm Agreement (2018), Riyadh Agreement (2019), truce agreement (2022)	

Summary:

Affected by several conflicts in recent decades, Yemen began a difficult transition in 2011 after the revolts that forced Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down as president after more than 30 years in office. The eventful aftermath led to a rebellion by Houthi forces and former President Saleh against the transitional government presided over by Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee in early 2015. In March 2015, an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia decided to intervene militarily in the country in support of the deposed government. Since then, levels of violence in the conflict have escalated. Given this turn of events, the United Nations, which has been involved in the country since the beginning of the transition, has tried to promote a political solution to the conflict, joined by some regional and international actors. Despite these initiatives, the meetings were unsuccessful, and the talks have been at an impasse since mid-2016. It was not until late 2018 that meetings between the parties resumed and led to the signature of the Stockholm Agreement at the end of that year, arousing cautious expectations about the possibilities of a political solution to the conflict. The hostilities have significantly worsened the security and humanitarian situation in the country. In 2019, under the mediation of Saudi Arabia, various actors signed the Riyadh Agreement to try to resolve the struggles and differences within the anti-Houthis faction. In 2022, the internationally recognised

14 Saudi Arabia also plays a role as a mediator/facilitator in disputes between various actors on the anti-Houthi side.

government backed by Riyadh and the Houthis reached a five-point truce agreement at the request of the UN. Though it ceased to be formally in force months later, in practice the de facto drop in hostilities and violence has held up, as well as some parts of the agreement. Meanwhile, direct negotiations began between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman.

The development of events in Yemen during 2023 raised expectations about the possibilities of moving towards a political solution to the conflict, but by the end of the year the prospects for a possible agreement remained in doubt given the regional impact of the hostilities in Gaza and particularly the rising tension in the Red Sea. Despite the identification of many different challenges, **in the first months of 2023 local, regional and international factors came together to shape conditions that observers described as a “historic opportunity” to address the armed conflict in Yemen through negotiations** after eight years of clashes and high-intensity violence that have cost the lives of tens of thousands of Yemenis and have pushed the country into a dramatic humanitarian crisis.

The first factor leading to this assessment was the significant drop in violence in the country compared to previous years, a result of the ceasefire agreement promoted by the UN in April 2022. Though the deal formally fell apart in the last quarter of 2022 (it was renewed twice, but not in October 2022), it was informally maintained. **The hostilities continued at low levels throughout 2023, albeit in a context of fragility, while other parts of the agreement remained in force.**

Despite the failure to reissue the truce and the deadlock in the UN-sponsored process, attributed to the Houthis for making additional demands in the intra-Yemeni negotiations, the channels of dialogue remained open. **Since October 2022, the main negotiating track has been the one established between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman.** The Houthis had made no secret of their interest in dealing directly with Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, Riyadh’s involvement in the Omani track was interpreted as a reflection of its intention to withdraw as soon as possible from an armed conflict that has been costly, has gone far beyond what it anticipated and has not achieved its objectives, as it has not restored the deposed government, defeated or weakened the Houthis, which it claims have links with Iran. On the contrary, the relationship between the Houthis and Tehran has been strengthened during the conflict and the group has consolidated its control over much of the northern part of the country.

Alongside the meetings in the Omani track, rapprochement was announced between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March 2023 under the auspices of China as part of Beijing’s greater role in Middle Eastern affairs. The agreement to reestablish relations, reached after a

diplomatic breakdown that had dragged on since 2016 amidst geopolitical tension and power struggles in the region, was made possible through contacts initially facilitated by Iraq and Oman. **The rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran was interpreted as a factor that could potentially help to address the Yemeni conflict, considering both countries’ role in it.** In fact, one of Riyadh’s conditions for restoring relations with Iran was that Tehran had to end its support for the Houthis and sway them in the negotiating process. However, analysts raised a series of doubts about Iran’s ability to influence the Yemeni group due to its more limited influence compared to other organisations operating in the region. **Another factor that encouraged positive expectations about the Yemeni process was an exchange of prisoners resulting in the release of over 900 people in April.** The internationally recognised Yemeni government and the Houthis released 869 detainees following a deal made in Switzerland in March after a series of agreements facilitated by the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as part of the implementation of the 2018 Stockholm Agreement. Also in March, the ICRC facilitated Saudi Arabia’s release and return of another 104 prisoners to Yemen. Overall, it was the largest prisoner exchange since October 2020, when a thousand prisoners were released, also as part of the Stockholm Agreement. The coordination committee for the prisoner exchange met again in Amman in June and the parties reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the release of all detainees under the principle of “all for all”.

The Omani track led to several meetings in the following months, including a visit in April by Saudi representatives and Omani representatives to Sana’a, the Yemeni capital controlled by the Houthis since 2014. In June, in another sign of the détente between the parties, the first flight took place from Sana’a to Saudi Arabia, which transported 270 Yemenis to Jeddah for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. According to media reports, General Yahya Ruzami, the head of the Houthi military committee for negotiations, travelled on a second flight of Yemeni Muslim pilgrims that same month. **In September, a Houthi delegation travelled to Riyadh in its first official visit since the escalation of hostilities in 2015. According to the official version of the event, the parties addressed the points of the road map to support a peace process in Yemen during five days of meetings.** The issues subject to negotiation in these talks included the use of Yemeni resources to pay salaries in Houthi-controlled territory, the opening of ports and roads in Yemen and the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Yemeni soil.

During 2023, **UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg continued with his shuttle diplomacy and tried to coordinate the different diplomatic efforts in**

Yemen through meetings with several different actors, including periodic meetings with representatives of the Houthis and the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), senior officials in Washington, Riyadh, Muscat and Abu Dhabi, ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom) and meetings with representatives of Egypt, the Arab League, Iran (virtual) and others. In April, Grundberg recognised that developments in various areas created the most serious opportunity to end the Yemeni conflict, but insisted then and throughout the year on the need for the Omani track to support UN mediation efforts with a view to an intra-Yemeni process that would address different political, security, economic, governance and other types of challenges. **Some Yemeni analysts and stakeholders**, like the Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies, **warned of the risks of reaching an agreement between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis at the expense of other Yemeni actors**, stressing the importance of achieving an inclusive agreement mediated by the United Nations and of considering principles of transitional justice to avoid dynamics of revenge and new cycles of violence. The US also continued to be involved in the Yemeni peace process. In September, Washington promoted a trilateral meeting with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to address differences between the two main regional actors that have become militarily involved in supporting the internationally recognised government.

In late 2023, the Yemeni peace process was affected by the events in Gaza and the subsequent escalation of regional tensions

In this context, **in the final quarter of 2023, the Yemeni peace process was affected by the events in Gaza and the subsequent escalation of regional tensions across multiple fronts**. From a position declaredly opposed to Israel, which has been part of their political ideology for decades, the Houthis began launching missile and drone attacks in mid-October, first against Israel and then against Israeli-owned ships, ships bound for Israel and other commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis said they would only stop these attacks if the Israeli attacks and siege on the Gaza Strip stopped and if access to food and medicine were provided there. In mid-December, the US announced the establishment of an international military operation to counter and deter attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea. From the outset, the UN envoy stressed the importance of maintaining a favourable environment for continuing negotiations leading to a political agreement for Yemen. According to him, contacts between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis in December had led to an understanding very close to a long-term ceasefire agreement. At the end of the year, the office of the UN special envoy reported that after speaking with the president of the PLC in Riyadh and chief Houthi negotiator Mohamed Abdulsalam in Muscat, **the parties confirmed that they would set the conditions for a nationwide ceasefire and resume a peace process under the auspices of the UN**. According

to reports, the parties would work on a road map that would include a truce, the payment of all public salaries, the reduction of restrictions around the port of Al Hudaydah and the Sana'a airport and the opening of roads in Taiz and other parts of the country. **According to media reports, however, by the end of 2023, the United States was pressuring Riyadh to delay signing the agreement with the Houthis and, on the contrary, to join the international coalition to stop the Yemeni group's attacks in the Red Sea**. Faced with how events were developing, Riyadh made public calls for restraint and to avoid escalation, while the Houthis' chief negotiator said that their attacks in the Red Sea did not threaten the peace talks with Saudi Arabia.

During the year, the UN special envoy and other figures also drew attention to provocative attitudes that could jeopardise the de facto ceasefire and warned about intermittent incidents on the front lines. The war also continued to be fought economically. **Some of the main challenges for Yemen's political process continued to be the division in the Houthi camp, reflected in the disputes between the different factions that make up the**

Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), and the separatist aspirations of some armed groups in the south of the country. As such, various southern Yemeni political groups held a five-day meeting in Aden in May in which they approved a "national charter". Several of them announced that they were joining the separatist platform Southern Transitional Council (STC), supported by the UAE. Subsequently, STC President

Aidarous al-Zoubaidi, who is also the vice president of the PLC, pushed for changes in the leadership of the separatist platform that brought on Abdelraman al-Mahrami, the commander of the Giant Brigades, one of the strongest armed groups in the country, and General Faraj Salmeen al-Bahsani. This meant that now three of the eight members of the Presidential Leadership Council are part of the STC, thereby strengthening the separatist platform's political and military position. In May and June, Saudi Arabia hosted meetings of political and tribal representatives of Hadhramaut governorate, which announced the creation of the High Council for Hadhramaut and its own political charter. The movement was interpreted as an alternative to the STC and a further sign of the divisions between anti-Houthi sectors.

Gender, peace and security

Yemeni women continued to complain of their exclusion from formal negotiating forums and demand to participate in discussions about the political future of Yemen. As talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis moved forward and prisoner exchange agreements between the Houthis and the internationally recognised government progressed, some activists publicly and worriedly raised alarm about the exclusion of women and

other marginalised groups. In November, in a meeting with the UN special envoy in Amman (Jordan), over 30 Yemeni women (activists, academics and civil society representatives) demanded a place in the deliberations as a right, not a privilege, and as a guarantee for sustainable peace in the country. During the meeting, they defined some priorities for an agreement on the future of Yemen, some of which coincide with those outlined in the commitments reached by the parties at the end of the year: a ceasefire, the reopening of roads and public sector salary payments. They also exchanged opinions on possible confidence-building measures on issues such as maps of explosive devices to facilitate demining, the unconditional release of all detained people and a commitment to avoid new kidnappings

and arbitrary detentions. Some reports also stressed the disconnect between dialogue tracks 1 and 3 due in part to the different visions of peace held by the different actors involved. The Yemeni women's approach was more complex than envisioning the mere absence of war and included aspects of daily life and meeting the population's basic needs. As such, **analysts highlighted the crucial peacebuilding work that Yemeni women continued to carry out despite the many obstacles and impacts of the war. These efforts included supporting programmes for reintegrating child soldiers, opening humanitarian corridors and mediating tribal disputes.** During 2023, women's organisations also continued to document abuses committed as part of the armed conflict.

Annex 1. Summary of armed conflicts in 2023¹

Conflict ² -beginning-	Type ³	Main parties ⁴	Intensity ⁵
			Trend ⁶
AFRICA			
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, Imbonerakure Youth branch, political party CNDD-FDD, political party CNL, armed groups RED-Tabara, FPB (previously FOREBU), FNL	1
	Government		↑
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) -2018-	Internationalised internal	Government of Cameroon, government of Nigeria, political-military secessionist movement including the opposition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako, to which the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF belong) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), different militias and smaller armed groups	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups that are members of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC, made up of anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, FPRC, MPC and UPC), Siriri ethnic armed opposition coalition AAKG, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia, Wagner Group	2
	Government, Resources		=
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Angola, Burundi, MONUSCO, EAC Regional Force (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan), SAMIDRC (SADC Regional Force composed by South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania); pro-government militias Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP, known as Wazalendo, composed of dozens of former Mai Mai militias and other armed groups from North Kivu and South Kivu, like APCLS, PARECO-FF, Nyatura, Raïa Mutomboki), FDLR, FDLR splinter groups (CNRD-Ubwiyunge, RUD-Urunana), private security companies (Agemira RDC and Congo Protection); March 23 Movement (M23), Twirwaneho, Rwanda; other armed groups not part of Wazalendo, Burundian armed groups; ugandan armed group LRA; Ituri groups and community militias (including CODECO/URDPC, FPIC, FRPI, MAPI, Zaire-FPAC)	3
	Government, Identity, Resources		↑
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	3
	System, Resources		=

1. Table from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria 2024.
2. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict
3. This report classifies and analyses armed conflicts using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following main causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or the struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). In respect of the second type, the armed conflicts may be of an internal, Internationalised internal or international nature. An internal armed conflict is defined as a conflict involving armed actors from the same state who operate exclusively within the territory of this state. Secondly, an internationalised internal armed conflict is defined as that in which at least one of the parties involved is foreign and/or in which the tension spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Another factor taken into account in order to consider an armed conflict as internationalised internal is the existence of military bases of armed groups in neighbouring countries (in connivance with these countries) from which attacks are launched. Finally, an international conflict is one in which state and non-state parties from two or more countries confront each other. It should also be taken into account that most current armed conflicts have a significant regional or international dimension and influence due, among other factors, to flows of refugees, the arms trade, economic or political interests (such as legal or illegal exploitation of resources) that the neighbouring countries have in the conflict, the participation of foreign combatants or the logistical and military support provided by other states.
4. This column shows the actors that intervene directly in the hostilities. The main actors who participate directly in the conflicts are made up of a mixture of regular or irregular armed parties. The conflicts usually involve the government, or its armed forces, fighting against one or several armed opposition groups, but can also involve other irregular groups such as clans, guerrillas, warlords, armed groups in opposition to each other or militias from ethnic or religious communities. Although they most frequently use conventional weapons, and more specifically small arms (which cause most deaths in conflicts), in many cases other methods are employed, such as suicide attacks, bombings and sexual violence and even hunger as a weapon of war. There are also other actors who do not directly participate in the armed activities but who nevertheless have a significant influence on the conflict.
5. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
6. This column compares the trend of the events of 2023 with those that of 2022. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2023 has been more serious than in the previous year; the reduction of violence symbol (↓) indicates an improvement in the situation; and the unchanged (=) symbol indicates that no significant changes have taken place.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
DRC (west) -2023-	Internal	DRC, Teke community militias, Yaka community militias (including the armed group Mobondo) and other allied community militias	2
	Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Ethiopia (Amhara) -2023-	Internationalised internal	Government of Ethiopia, government of Amhara Region, Amharic Fano militia	3
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↑
Ethiopia (Oromia) -2022-	Internal	Government of Ethiopia, government of Oromia Region, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Amharic Fano militia	3
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		=
Ethiopia (Tigray) -2020-	Internationalised internal	Government of Ethiopia, government of Eritrea, security forces and militias of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), security forces of the Amhara and Afar regions, Amharic Fano militia	End
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↓
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of Nigeria, pro-government militia Civilian Joint Task Force, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), civilian militias, Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF – Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)	3
	System		=
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Unity based in Tripoli; government based in Tobruk; various armed groups, including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called the Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF); ISIS; AQIM; mercenaries; Wagner Group; Turkey	1
	Government, Resources, System		=
Mali -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD), which brings together the armed groups affiliated with CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA) and Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction); Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM); Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), also known as Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP); Katiba Macina; MINUSMA; Russia; Wagner Group	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Mozambique (North) -2019-	Internationalised internal	Government, Islamic State's Central Africa Province (ISCAP) or Islamic State's Mozambique Province (ISMP), previously known as Ahlu Sunnah Waljama'a (ASWJ), al-Qaeda, South African private security company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa; Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM); "Naparama" local militias	1
	System, Identity		↓
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan and warlord militias, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, Turkey, ATMIS, EU NAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta), Combined Task Force 151, al-Shabaab, ISIS	3
	Government, System		↑
Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) -2023-	Internal	Republic of Somaliland, SSC Khatumo administration (Khatumo State)	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Sudan -2023- ⁷	Internationalised internal	Government (Sudan Armed Forces), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), various SLA factions, Eastern Sudan Liberation Forces, United People's Front for Liberation and Justice, Beja National Congress, Beja Armed Congress, community militias, Wagner Group	3
	Government, Self-government, Resources, Identity		↑
South Sudan -2009-	Internationalised internal	Government (SPLM/A); armed group SPLA-in Opposition (Riek Machar faction), SPLA-IO dissident Kitgwang factions led by Peter Gatdet, Simon Gatwech Dual and Johnson Olony ("Agwalek"), SPLM-FD, SSSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM; REMNASA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSOA, community militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwalek), armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously known as the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance, SSOMA), which includes the rebel organisations NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		↓

7. In previous years, two distinct armed conflicts were identified in Sudan: Sudan (Darfur), which began in 2003, and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), which started in 2012. Both conflicts, characterised as internationalised internal and motivated by self-government, resources and identity, were analysed jointly in this edition as part of the Sudanese armed conflict. This is because the dynamics of the armed conflict that began in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affect a large part of the country and particularly the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Irregular armed actors from these regions are also actively involved in the conflict.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
Western Sahel Region -2018-	International	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), Joint Task Force for the Liptako-Gourma Region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso); MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), USA, Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), also known as Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), Katiba Macina, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia, Wagner Group	3
	System, Resources, Identity		↑
AMERICA			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, Estado Mayor Central (EMC), Segunda Marquetalia, narco-paramilitary groups	2
	System		=
ASIA			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, National Resistance Front (NRF), ISIS-KP, Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)	2
	System		↓
Philippines (NPA) -1969-	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		=
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/Dawlah Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, Toraiife Group, MILF and MNLF factions	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Governments, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed, United Jihad Council, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), The Resistance Front (TRF)	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, The Resistance Front (TRF)	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Myanmar -1948-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups (signatories of the ceasefire: ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU; non-signatories of the ceasefire: KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP); PDF	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-KP	3
	System		↑
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, BLA, BNA, BLF and BLT; LeJ, TTP, ISIS-KP	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, BRN and other armed separatist opposition groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
EUROPE			
Turkey (southeast) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Russia - Ukraine -2022-	International	Russia, Wagner Group, Donbas militias, Ukraine	3
	Government, Territory		=
MIDDLE EAST			
Egypt (Sinai) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (SP, branch of ISIS), pro-government militia Sinai Tribal Union (STU)	1
	System		↓
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish forces (peshmergas), Shia militias, Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs) and Saraya Salam, Sunni militias, ISIS, US-led international anti-ISIS coalition, USA, Iran, Turkey	3
	System, Government, Identity, Resources		↓

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
MIDDLE EAST			
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafist groups, Jenin, Brigades, Nablus Brigades, Tubas Brigades, Lion's Den	3
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Israel – Hezbollah	International	Israel, Hezbollah	1
	System, Government, Territory, Resources		↑
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army, Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition led by the Kurdish militias YPG/YPJ of the PYD), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, US-led international anti-ISIS coalition, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, Group Wagner Israel	3
	Government, System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Yemen -2004-	Internationalised internal	Armed forces loyal to the internationally recognised government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias (including Happy Yemen Brigades), armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, separatist groups under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Joint Forces (including the Giant Brigades), AQAP, ISIS, international Saudi Arabian-led coalition, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), USA and international military coalition Guardian of Prosperity	3
	System, Government, Identity		↓

1: low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity;

↑: escalation of violence; ↓: decrease of violence ; = : unchanged; End: no longer considered an armed conflict

Glossary

- AA:** Arakan Army
AANES: Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
ABSDF: All Burma Students' Democratic Front
ABM: Ansar Beit al-Maqdis
ACCORD: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
ADF: Allied Democratic Forces
AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ALP: Arakan Liberation Party
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia
APCLS: Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo
APSA: African Peace and Security Architecture
AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AQAP: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ARB: Autonomous Region of Bougainville
ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a
AU: African Union
AUBP: African Union Border Program
AU-MVCM: AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission
BDB: Benghazi Defense Brigades
BIFF: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BINUH: United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
BLA: Baluch Liberation Army
BLF: Baluch Liberation Front
BLT: Baluch Liberation Tigers
BOL: Bangsamoro Organic Law
BRA: Balochistan Republican Army
BRN: Barisan Revolusi Nasional
BRP: Baluch Republican Party
CAR: Central African Republic
CARICOM: Caribbean Community
CCSMR: Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic
CDN: Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation
CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CENCO: Congolese Episcopal Conference
CENTCOM: United States Central Command
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
CMA: Coordination of Movements of Azawad
CMFPR: Coordination of Movements and Patriotic Front of Resistance
CNARED: National Council for the Respect of the Peace Agreement and the Reconciliation of Burundi and the Restoration of the Rule of Law
CNDD-FDD: National Congress for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy
CNDP: National Congress for the Defense of the People
CNF: Chin National Front
CNL: National Congress for Freedom
CNR: National Council of the Republicans
COSPAC: Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance
CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPC: Coalition of Patriots for Change
CPSR: Permanent Framework for Consultation and Reflection
CPE: Center for Peace Education
CPI-M: Communist Party of India-Maoist
CST: High Transition Council
CSP-PSD: Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development
DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DKBA: Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DMLEK: Democratic Movement for the Liberation of the Eritrean Kunama
DMZ: Demilitarised Zone
DNIS: Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue
DPA: Darfur Peace Agreement
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC: East African Community
ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
EDA: Eritrean Democratic Alliance
EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone
EFDM: Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement
EH Bildu: Euskal Herria Bildu
EIC: Eritrean Islamic Congress
EIPJD - Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development
ELF: Eritrean Liberation Front
ELN: National Liberation Army
EMC: Estado Mayor Central
ENSF: Eritrean National Salvation Front
EPC: Eritrean People's Congress
EPDF: Eritrean People's Democratic Front
EPL: Popular Liberation Army
EPG: Eminent Persons Group
EPPK: Collective of Basque Political Prisoners
EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERC: Republican Left of Catalonia
ETA: Basque Country and Freedom
ETIM: East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETLO: East Turkestan Liberation Organization
EU: European Union
EUBAM: EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, in Moldova (Transdnistria)
EUFOR: European Union Force
EULEX: European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUMA: EU Mission in Armenia
EUMM: EU Observation Mission in Georgia
EUNAVFOR Somalia: European Union Naval Force - Somalia, Operation Atalanta

FACT: Front for Change and Concord in Chad
FARC-EP: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army
FARDC: Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
FDLR: Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FGN: Federal Government of Nagaland
FLEC-FAC: Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda
FLM: Macina Liberation Front
FNL: National Liberation Forces
FPB: Popular Forces of Burundi
FPR: Popular Front for Recovery
FPRC: Patriotic Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic
GATIA: Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
GERD: Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GID: Geneva International Discussions
GNA: Government of National Accord
GNS: Government of National Stability
GNU: Government of National Unity
GNWP: Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
GPRN/NSCN: Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland / National Socialist Council of Nagaland
GSIM: Support Group for Islam and Muslims
GSPC: Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
G7: The Group of Seven
HCUA: High Council for the Unity of Azawad
HRW: Human Rights Watch
HTS: Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
ICC: International Criminal Court
ICG: International Crisis Group
ICGLR: International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
ICRC: International Committee for the Red Cross
IFLO: Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IHL: International Humanitarian Law
INSTEX: Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges
IOM: International Organization for Migration
IPRM: Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism
IRGC: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISGS: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISIS: Islamic State
ISSG: International Syria Support Group
ISWAP: Islamic State in the Province of West Africa
IU: United Left
IWF: Iduwini Volunteers Force
JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JEM: Justice and Equality Movement
JKLF: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JMB: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (Mujahideen Assembly)
JNIM: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (Support Group for Islam and Muslims)
KANU: Kenya African National Union
KCP: Kangleipak Communist Party
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDPI: Kurdistan Democratic Party - Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
KFOR: Kosovo Force
KIA: Kachin Independence Army
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
KNA: Kuki Liberation Army
KNF: Kuki National Front
KNLAPC: Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU: Kayin National Union
KNU/KNLA: Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
KPLT: Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
KWN: Kosovo Women's Network
KYKL: Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Organization for the Salvation of the Revolutionary Movement in Manipur)
LDU: Lahu Democratic Union
LeJ: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Jhangvi Army)
LeT: Lashkar-e-Toiba (Jhangvi Army)
LGBTIQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual and Plus
LNA: Libyan National Army
LRA: Lord's Resistance Army
M23: March 23 Movement
MAA: Arab Movement of Azawad
MASSOB: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MEND: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MFDC: Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance
MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINUSCA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MLCJ: Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice
MNDAA: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MNJTF: Multinational Joint Task Force
MNLA: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MNLF: Moro National Liberation Front
MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MPC: Patriotic Movement for Central Africa
MRC: Mombasa Republican Council
MSA: Movement for the Salvation of Azawad
MUD: Democratic Unity Roundtable
MUYAO: United Movement for Jihad in West Africa
MVMV: Mechanism of Oversight, Monitoring and Verification
MWMN: Mediterranean Women Mediators' Network
NAM: Non-Aligned Movement
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NBI: Nile Basin Initiative
NCA: Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NCC: National Consultative Council
NCP: National Congress Party
NDA: Niger Delta Avengers
NDAA: National Democratic Alliance Army
NDF: National Democratic Front
NDFB: National Democratic Front of Boroland
NDFB-P: National Democratic Front of Boroland - Progressive
NDFB-RD: Ranjan Daimary faction of The National Democratic Front of Boroland
NDGJM: Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate
NDPVF: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDV: Niger Delta Vigilante
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NIDCA: Niger Delta Consultative Assembly
NMSP: New Mon State Party
NNC: Naga National Council
NNC/GDRN/NA: Naga National Council/ Government Democratic Republic of Nagaland/ Non-Accord
NNPG: National Naga Political Groups
NOREF: Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution
NPA: New People's Army
NPGN: National People's Government of Nagaland
NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSCN (K-K): National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Kole-Kitovi)
NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaac Muivah
NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
NSCN-R: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation
NSLA: National Santhal Liberation Army
NSSOG: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups
NTC-ELCAC: National Task Force to end the Local Communist Armed Conflict, National Security Commission
NTJ: National Towheed Jamaat
OAS: Organization of American States
OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDM: Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
OIC: Organization for Islamic Cooperation
OIF: International Organization of La Francophonie
OLA: Oromo Liberation Army
OLF: Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPC: Oromo People's Congress
OPM: Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Organization of Free Papua)
OPRARU: Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA: Palestinian Authority
PANDEF: Pan-Niger Delta Forum
PCPSR: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research
PDKI: Kurdish Democratic Party
PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PJAK: Party for the Free Life in Kurdistan
PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PNA: Palestinian National Authority
PNDPC: Pan Niger Delta Peoples' Congress
PNLO: Pa-Oh National Liberation Organization
PNV: Basque Nationalist Party
POLISARIO: Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro
PP: Spain's Popular Party
PPS: Peace Process Secretariat
PREPAK: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PREPAK (Pro): People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak / Progressive
PS: Province of Sinai
PSC AU: Peace and Security Council AU
PSE-EE: Socialist Party of the Basque Country-Euskadiko Ezkerra
PSOE: Spanish Socialist Worker's Party
PYD: Democratic Union Party of Kurds in Syria
R-ARCSS: Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RABMM: Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
RAMM: Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
RCSS/SSA- South: Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan State Army – South
RDNP: Rally of Progressive National Democrats
RECOM: Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia
RED-Tabara: Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi
RENAMO: Mozambican National Resistance
REWL: Red Egbesu Water Lions
RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front
RPF: Revolutionary People's Front
RPMP-RPA-ABB: Rebolusyonaryong Partido Manggagawa ng Pilipinas/Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade
RSADO: Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization
RSF: Rapid Support Forces
SADC: Southern Africa Development Community
SADR: Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SAF: Sudan Armed Forces
SCACUF: Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front
SDC: Syrian Democratic Council
SCDF: Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces
SCPS: Southern Cameroons People's Secretariat
SDF: Social Democratic Front of Cameroon
SDF: Syrian Democratic Forces
SIGI: Social Institutions and Gender Index
SLA: Sudan Liberation Army
SLA-AW: Sudan Liberation Army - Abdul Wahid
SLA-MM: Sudan Liberation Army - Minni Minnawi
SLDF: Sabaot Land Defence Forces
SLM-MM: Sudan Liberation Movement - Minni Minnawi
SOCADEF: Southern Cameroons Defence Forces
SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army

SPLA-IO: SPLA in Opposition
SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-IO: Sudan People's Liberation Movement – in Opposition
SPLM-N: Sudan People's Liberation Army - North
SRF: Sudan Revolutionary Forces
SSA: Shan State Army
SSA-N: Shan State Army – North
SSDM/A: South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army
SSLA: South Sudan Liberation Army
SSOMA: South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance
SSPP: Shan State Progress Party
SSPP/SSA-N: Shan State Progress Party / Shan State Army – North
SSUF: South Sudan United Front
START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
STC: Southern Transitional Council
SWIFT: Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
TAK: The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons
TCG: Trilateral Contact Group
TFG: Transitional Federal Government
TJ-WGE: Working Group of Experts on Transitional Justice
TMC: Transitional Military Council
TNLA: Ta-ang National Liberation Army
TPLF: Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTP: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAE: United Arab Emirates
UCDP: Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UDPS: Union for Democracy and Social Progress
UFDD: Union of the Forces for Democracy and Development
UFR: Union of Resistance Forces
UK: United Kingdom
ULFA: United Liberation Front of Assam
ULFA-I: United Liberation Front of Assam - Independent
ULFA-PTF: Pro-Talks faction of United Liberation Front of Asom
UN: United Nations
UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI: United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMID: United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur
UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNFICYP: United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNFPA: United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNLF: United National Liberation Front
UNMIK: United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMHA: United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement
UNITAMS: United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCA: United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOCI: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSMIL: United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UPC: Union for Peace in Central Africa
UPLA: United People's Liberation Army
UPR: Universal Periodic Review
USA: United States of America
USAN: Union of South American Nations
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWSA: United Wa State Army
UWSP: United Wa State Party
WAP: Women's Advisory Board for the Sustainable Peacebuilding
WB: World Bank
WFP: World Food Program
WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
YPG: People's Protection Unit
YPJ: Women's Protection Units
YWPL: Young Women for Peace and Leadership
ZUF: Zeliangrong United Front

About the School for a Culture of Peace

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, hereinafter ECP) is an academic peace research institution located at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The School for a Culture of Peace was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, Track II diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities.

The main fields of action of the Escola de Cultura de Pau are:

- Research. Its main areas of research include armed conflicts and socio-political crises, peace processes, human rights and transitional justice, the gender dimension in conflict and peacebuilding, and peace education.
- Teaching and training. ECP staff gives lectures in postgraduate and graduate courses in several universities, including its own Graduate Diploma on Culture of Peace at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It also provides training sessions on specific issues, including conflict sensitivity and peace education.
- Track II diplomacy. The ECP promotes dialogue and conflict-transformation through Track II initiatives, including facilitation tasks with different actors and on various themes.
- Consultancy services. The ECP carries out a variety of consultancy services for national and international institutions.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising. Initiatives include activities addressed to the Spanish and Catalan society, including contributions to the media.

Escola de Cultura de Pau

Edifici B13, Carrer de Vila Puig, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona 08193 Bellaterra (Spain)

Tel: +34 93 581 14 14

Email: pr.conflict.escolapau@uab.cat / Web: <http://escolapau.uab.cat>



Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios is a yearbook that analyses peace processes and negotiations that took place in the world during 2023. The examination of the development and dynamics of negotiations worldwide allows to provide a comprehensive overview of peace processes, identify trends and comparatively analyse the various scenarios. *Peace Talks in Focus 2023. Report on Trends and Scenarios* also analyses the evolution of peace processes from a gender perspective. One of the main objectives of this report is to provide information and analysis to those who participate in peaceful conflict resolution at different levels, including parties to disputes, mediators, civil society activists and others. The yearbook also aims to grant visibility to different formulas of dialogue and negotiation aimed at reversing dynamics of violence and channelling conflicts through political means in many contexts. Thus, it seeks to highlight, enhance and promote political, diplomatic and social efforts aimed at transforming conflicts and their root causes through peaceful methods.

The yearbook *Peace Talks in Focus: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, published by Escola de Cultura de Pau, is an established benchmark in analysing and monitoring peace talks, negotiations and processes. Its publication is a particularly important milestone given the volatility of the subject and the challenges inherent in evaluating and identifying trends and lessons learned in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, the gender perspective running through the yearbook highlights the importance of the effective participation of women, the LGTBQIA+ population, indigenous communities and other marginalised groups, making it a key tool for promoting more inclusive and sustainable peace processes. In short, this is an indispensable resource for everyone who is part of or contributes to promoting peace efforts in contexts of violence.

Albert Charara
Programme Officer of the European Institute of Peace (EIP)

On the global stage, where conflicts and geostrategic competition are intensifying while military expenditure reaches unprecedented heights and arms control frameworks and crisis management agreements are becoming obscured, the yearbook *Peace Talks in Focus: Report on Trends and Scenarios* has become more imperative to read and study than ever. This report not only provides a fundamental analysis of ongoing peace processes, but it also meticulously explores emerging trends in dialogue, mediation and negotiations, enriched with a gender perspective. Against the background of conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Palestine, as well as calls to increase military spending around the world, this publication stands as an essential tool for understanding and addressing contemporary conflicts from a perspective of peace.

Luca Gervasoni i Vila
Director of the Institute Novact of Nonviolence (NOVACT)

With the support of:

